

<b>Name</b>	Jin-young Chun
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<b>Supervisor</b>	Pentti Kareoja
<b>Advisor</b>	Tommy Lindgren
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<b>School</b>	School of Arts, Design and Architecture
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## Abstract

This thesis is about public spaces in Helsinki, focusing on cultivating urban life during the winter months. Unlike the vibrant public life present during the summer, public spaces in winter are mostly unavailable and consequently, public life is highly limited. Through a literature review, the study of public life is explained, and its historical background, methods, and primary focus are elaborated. Through observational research, how public spaces in winter Helsinki, particularly around the Helsinki central railway station, are used by the public is described. The research findings revealed that the streets and commercial places are the most frequently used public spaces in winter. The key argument is that because of the long wintertime, it needs to be considered thoughtfully how public life in winter has developed and how it can be improved. Through further discussion of these aspects, design ideas to help promote public life on the street and in commercial areas are suggested.

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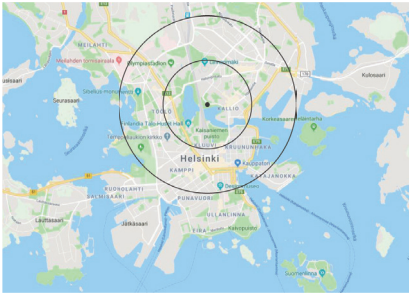
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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Living abroad typically brings a new perspective towards living environments which have been experienced and taken for granted in one’s home country. The living environment, in this context, could mean everything encountered in daily life, ranging from the influence of man-made systems to natural factors such as climate. Helsinki was ranked the 10th best city for quality of life by Monocle magazine in 2018 and was ranked even higher at 6th in 2019. In terms of quality of life, Helsinki City is also promoting its livability with objective data, for example, ‘Helsinki ranks first in life quality’ (Creative City Index 2014) and ‘People living in Helsinki have the highest satisfaction with the place where they live’ (European Commission, Quality of Life in European Cities 2015)(1). Setting aside Finland’s social achievements in the economy, education, welfare, and so on, although the quality of city life is basically derived from those achievements, the personal experience of city life in Helsinki supports these developments.

City environment for enjoying urban life



1 KM RADIUS AND 2 KM RADIUS  
FROM HELSINKI CENTRAL RAILWAY STATION

Helsinki is relatively a small city in terms of population and land area. Many of the historical and cultural places are located near a central railway station, and it is a short journey to reach any of Helsinki’s coastlines or green areas from the central railway station, which means that enjoyment of nature is integrated into city life.

Even though the size of the central region is ideal to enjoy city life, without an adequate transportation system, life in the city may become desolate and dull. In Helsinki, a functional public transportation system makes daily journeys in the city smooth and pleasant. According to Helsinki City Plan 2050, the city government aims to improve the overall efficiency of the transportation system through developing various modes of transportation which are closely integrated with one another. One of the visions for the future of Helsinki is to be a city with sustainable mobility and the prioritization of walking and cycling



as a primary means of transportation (2). In 2017, the percentage of journeys by cycling as a means of public transport was 78%. After the city bicycle system successfully launched in 2016, the number of users and bicycle stations has been growing every year (3)(4). Additionally, since a pedestrian plan for the city center was approved in 1989, pedestrian streets have been extended and even an underground tunnel has been constructed (5).

Furthermore, Helsinki maintains its human scale almost everywhere (6). Even though Helsinki’s method of city planning has been affected by modernism, the effect is not as prominent as it is in other Western countries. The newly built buildings are quite high according to the city government’s growth plan, but these buildings are currently limited to certain areas, and the city is still maintaining more human scale-spaces that people could walk around and enjoy city life compared to megacities. While it is expected that the city’s population will increase to 860,000 by 2050 compared to 643,272 in January of 2018, Helsinki will not lose its character as a human scale city, but rather will continue to offer ‘a unique backdrop to urban city life, recreation, enjoyment and travel’ (7).

Last but not least, high air quality in Helsinki helps to enable these conditions to actually function. According to statistics compiled by Urban Research and Statistics in Helsinki, it was recorded that air quality in the city center area was 95% ‘good’ or ‘satisfactory’ in 2017. Compared to this same statistic in 2013 which was around 80%, the air quality has improved relatively quickly. Remarkably, the recorded percentage of hours for ‘good’ air quality, which was slightly less than 25% in 2013, had gradually improved and reached over 55% in 2017 (8).

Magical places and stage

Anyone who lives in a city would prefer to have a high quality of life in their living environment. Although quality of life could mean different things depending on the person, most would agree, for example, that this includes having stable working conditions ensuring that they could consistently earn a living. However, even though these conditions have been fulfilled, more is still needed since life is not just for work. According to an article entitled ‘Toward an Urban Design Manifesto’ from the Journal of the American Planning Association (1987), it is argued that a city should consist of ‘magical places’ beyond the functional level so that people can ‘escape from the mundaneness of everyday work and living’. In this context, a city as a place for public life is referred to through the expression ‘a stage’.

*‘The city has always been a place of excitement;  
it is theater, a stage upon which  
citizens can display themselves and see others.’  
- Jacobs, Allan B. and Appleyard, Donald (9)*

LONG DAYLIGHT HOURS  
DURING SUMMER.  
A COMMON SCENE TRANSFORMS  
INTO A MAGICAL MOMENT.



It is all possible in Helsinki, in summer

It sounds more or less ideological, but Helsinki is more of a happening place to be in the summer. Because of the weather, there is a significant contrast between the quality of the outdoor environment during the summertime and wintertime, thus affecting the quality of city life. During the summer, the temperature is warm, yet cool enough to be outside and enjoy outdoor activities. It is reported that the highest daily average temperature in the summer of 2017 was 24.2°C. Conversely, the daily average temperature in winter was -21°C. The length of daytime also influences the activity of public life. In the summer, daytime lasts almost 19 hours compared to less than 6 hours for the shortest day in winter (10).

TWO DIFFERENT SCENES  
IN ESPLANADI PARK,  
IN JUNE (LEFT) AND IN MARCH (RIGHT).



Even it is natural that in every country, the city life is influenced by weather and there are differences depending on the seasons, the time when people could enjoy city life in Helsinki is too short. By the thermal criteria of the Finnish Meteorological Institute, winter is the longest season in Finland. In southern Finland, including Helsinki, winter starts in November and lasts until the end of March. While the winter lasts 4-5 months, summer lasts 3-4 months (11). Although the length of the season seems regular and not highly differentiated, because the thermal criterion to distinguish the seasons is lower, which is 0°C-10°C, the period during which city life cannot thrive is longer than the

official winter season. In sum, the duration of time that people can enjoy the city is brief, whereas the time people are not able to enjoy the city is long. In this thesis, the period of time when public life is hindered because of cold weather is called ‘wintertime’, which is not only limited to the official winter months.

Presumably, winter could be a perfect time for that ‘stage’ because the scenery appears magical whenever it snows. However, in practice, the weather is too cold to enjoy city life and the walkability is soon restricted after the beautiful white snow becomes slick black slush or dangerous icy roads. No one wants to put themselves on that ‘stage’. It is seemingly infeasible to find the ‘stage’ in winter, which means there are not as many available public spaces relative to the summer. Public spaces are accessible, but they are unusable because of the weather. This lack of usable public spaces causes a lack of enjoyable city life because it limits social experiences.



'BEAUTIFUL STAGE'  
A SUNNY DAY ON UUNISAARI,  
IN WINTER.

Is it all bad in winter?

There is a saying, ‘on the other side of endurance, joy waits’ (12) Indeed, through this climate, distinctive Finnish culture has been formed and developed, including the sauna, cozy homes with admirable interior designs, and the mindset to be thankful for their nature. Looking toward the long and dark wintertime, Finnish people have adapted to such a hard-living condition wisely and it is undeniable that their harsh climate has affected them in a positive way. However, because the lack of sunlight or long-lasting darkness in winter still negatively influences both physical and psychological conditions, it needs to be considered how these negative impacts could be mitigated.



'EMPTY STAGE'  
IN MERIKATU AND EIRANRANTA,  
IN WINTER.



Foreigner’s perspective



CONNECTIONS BETWEEN MALMI TRAIN STATION  
AND THE SHOPPING MALL NEXT TO IT.

To a foreigner who could view the situation partially but also differently, it seems that there is a major difference in the amount of enjoyment between the two seasons. I believe that one of the reasons that people who live in Helsinki enjoy city life in summer is because of a colorful urban environment which contains well designed public spaces and vibrant urban cultures. Thus, the urban environment during wintertime should be improved to encourage people to enjoy the winter, and as a result, positively benefit residents both physically and psychologically.

This thesis investigates the use of public space in wintertime. Focusing on walking experiences in winter urban environment, this thesis sought to determine how streets are being used and how they can provide a better experience to residents. The research area is a public space around Helsinki Central Railway Station. There are two reasons to choose the site. Firstly, the station is the most easily accessible location in winter. Since it is the junction of the main modes of transportation in Helsinki, it was assumed that there is a high probability to find some places to improve and achieve the desired effect. Secondly, the idea could be applied to other suburban areas around their main stations as well. Because the Helsinki City Planning Department has a plan to develop the ‘suburban centers’ outside of the current inner-city region because of the increasing population in Helsinki, (13) when the idea for the central railway station is agreed and implemented well, its benefits could also be spread to the other development areas.

## 1.2 Research questions

How are the public spaces around the Helsinki central railway station area currently used in the wintertime?

To foster a livable public life in winter, which public spaces in Helsinki have a crucial role in generating this and how could they be changed?

# 1.3 Thesis overview

**Literature Review:** As the research focuses on public life in winter Helsinki, each section contains the following;

- 1) Public life studies is framed as a part of urban studies via exploring the meaning of urban space and describing the historical background of urban studies.
- 2) The purpose, methods, and achievement of the study of public life are examined. From the general description of public life studies, the aim of the research is declared and the validity of the method 'observation' is explained.
- 3) The importance of basic activities in public life is established to explain the reason why the walking experiences on the streets are focused on in this research.
- 4) The need for researching winter public space is maintained by reviewing urban life in Helsinki.

Books were chosen according to the concerns for the subject with a keyword search of terms such as urban design, public life studies, winter cities, and Helsinki.

**Methodology:** The prominent method of data collection is observation. Part of the observational process includes walking as a method as it has a role in supporting the observation. Lessons from the observation process and limitations of the personal work of observation are included.

**Findings and Analysis:** Findings from the observations are detailed according to the examined sites. Two discussion points are drawn from the findings, which will form the basis of design ideas.

**Design Ideas:** Design ideas are suggested conceptually with simple drawings and case studies.

**Conclusion:** The main findings and design ideas are summarized and the importance of public space in winter is discussed. Furthermore, the necessity for further research and implementation are addressed.

# 2 Literature review

## 2.1 Urban studies and urban design

What 'urban' means?

Urban is defined by the Cambridge dictionary as ‘of or in a city or town’ (1). However, at first glance ‘urban’ does not seem to be completely synonymous with the term ‘city’, which has existed since antiquity while ‘urban’ seems to indicate contemporary cities. Furthermore, it is clearer when ‘urban’ is used with other words as it designates different things depending on the other word that is used in conjunction with it. For example, ‘urban studies’ or ‘urban design’, which is related to this thesis, does not mean solely the study of a city or the design of a town. Rather, urban studies means the study of the city itself, and is more related to any matter concerning people who are living in a city. Furthermore, ‘urban design denotes small-scale features of the built environment that impact how people feel about being in specific places’ (2). In terms of ‘urban planning, the urban within this term also has a different meaning from previous examples since urban planning concerns large scale regional planning and zoning. Even though this cannot be separated from the study of the people who are living in the city, urban planning concerns a larger scale than the level of human affairs. Thus, before using the term ‘urban’ in this thesis with other terms such as urban studies, urban design, or urban life, the definition of ‘urban’ needs to be clarified through reviewing the existing literature.



<div data-bbox="114 69 290 96" data-label="Page-Header"> <p>Historical review</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="550 69 1400 296" data-label="Text"> <p>Shortly following the 19th century, in Western countries, because of changes in the social and economic system during industrialization, people generally moved from the country to the city to make a living. However, at that time, the cities were not been yet prepared for a high population density. When the issue of overpopulation changed the city into poor living conditions, so-called slums developed, which brought several health problems such as outbreaks of disease.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="550 305 1400 1142" data-label="Text"> <p>Modernism was one of the responses to the desperate situation caused by the growing population. The arguments for modernizing cities were based on the poor ‘health and hygienic conditions’ of living areas (3). Le Corbusier led the modernism movement, and wrote significant essays entitled ‘Towards a New Architecture’ in 1923 and the manifesto of urban planning ‘Athens Charter’ in 1933. His idea of modernism was accepted by city planners and architects worldwide and has been shaped the modern city to this day. Modernism became the dominant architectural style in the mid-20th century through the idea of reorganizing cities to make them functional, efficient, and healthy. While large buildings, wide roads, and open green areas promised functional and modernized city life, the idea of suburban life began to flourish. Separation of functions was possible as the number of people who used cars had increased and the facilitated infrastructure and streets made for faster mobility. As a result, people who expected more air, light, and nature were scattered in larger places. From a functionalist viewpoint, it was a perfect model which should have been well functioning. However, the people who were living in suburban areas felt that something was lacked. It was expressed in concepts like ‘bedroom communities’ and ‘cultural impoverishment’ (4). Not only for the suburban area but also in the central region, it was far from what people imagined and dreamed. The city was designed for the efficient operation of functions, which was necessary at that time, but life in the city was dreary and desolate.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="550 1152 1400 1461" data-label="Text"> <p>To explain why modernism was not successful, Jan Gehl argued that it relates to ‘the tradition of craftsmanship’ in the construction of a city. He maintained that unlike the time before industrialization, when spaces in the city were made intuitively, ‘traditional know-how about the interaction of urban life and space’ was lost in the modernized method of designing a city. He continued that the intention of 20th-century planners and architects was to improve living conditions for people; however, ‘it can be difficult to see the individual’s daily life at eye level in these often abstract, large-scale projects’ (5).</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="2062 69 2912 260" data-label="Text"> <p>ers. Jane Jacobs is one of the most influential researchers in this area. Written by Jane Jacobs, <i>The Death and Life of Great American Cities</i> has become a classic to anyone studying architecture, urban design, or city planning. Her idea of the city environment has resulted in positive changes to public life in many countries and it is still an inspiration for current urban challenges.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="2062 269 2912 706" data-label="Text"> <p>It is worthy to mention that, including Jane Jacobs, not all of the pioneers who began to study public life in the 1960s were specialized in architecture or city planning, and many had other backgrounds in fields such as journalism or sociology. At first, their research has started when they just felt that something was wrong to the modernized city and they continued it by looking at public life of the city in daily situations. The engine that led them to research for the public life and brought fruitful results was not their professional knowledge of cities, but rather their intuition and persistent observations. This observation has become the core of public life studies and it is the primary methodology of this thesis. This will be described again in the following chapter. Then, how is ‘public life studies’ related to ‘urban studies’?</p> </div> <div data-bbox="2062 751 2912 906" data-label="Text"> <p>In the book <i>Public Places Urban Spaces</i>, the ‘four traditions of urban design thought’ were described. Since urban studies is correlated with urban design, to look through urban design traditions will give a clue for the understanding of the relationship between ‘public life studies’ and ‘urban studies’.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="2062 915 2912 1625" data-label="Text"> <p>According to the book, there are the first two traditions of urban design. The first tradition is ‘The visual-artistic tradition’ and the second is ‘The social usage tradition.’ While the first is more based on artistic thinking about designing a city, the following is concentrating on how people use space and how they sense a certain place. ‘The visual-artistic tradition’ has started from Camillo Sitte’s ‘City Planning According to Artistic Principles (1889)’ (Jarvis, cited in Carmona 2010) (6) who had a strong voice for human scale with an artistic approach for the city under modernization (7). Le Corbusier is also included in this tradition, as the author described him as “a key proponent of this tradition” (Jarvis, cited in Carmona 2010). The author stated that “it reflects an earlier, more architectural and narrower understanding of urban design”(8). Meanwhile, for ‘The social usage tradition’, Jane Jacobs was described as one of the key proponents with Jan Gehl and William H. Whyte. According to this, Jane Jacobs compared this tradition to the previous one as she said in her book <i>The Death and Life of Great American Cities</i> that “The look of things and the way they work are inextricably bound together, and in no place more so than cities. But people who are interested only in how a city ‘ought’ to look and uninterested in how it works will be disappointed by this book’ (9).</p> </div> <div data-bbox="2062 1634 2912 1743" data-label="Text"> <p>Additionally, there are two more traditions which are the ‘place-making tradition’ and ‘An emerging tradition- sustainable urbanism’. The former is ‘the synthesized approach of the two earlier traditions’ and the author added</p> </div>
<div data-bbox="114 1510 438 1537" data-label="Page-Header"> <p>The origin of public life studies</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="550 1510 1400 1743" data-label="Text"> <p>Jan Gehl is one of the pioneers who studied the interaction of public life and public space, along with authors such as Jane Jacobs, Christopher Alexander, and William H. Whyte. While the modernization of the city incorporated the whole system of the city, the idea of public life studies focused on the people and their lives in the city. From their theories and research, modernized cities began to change and the quality of city life has been improved for urban dwell-</p> </div>	

this ‘contemporary urban design is simultaneously concerned with the design of urban places as physical/aesthetic entities and as behavioral settings’. (10) Although it is written in 2010, it is considered that it is still valid to this day. The latter is a thought concerning environmental sustainability. It is introduced as ‘an emerging tradition’ in 2010 and now it is regarded as an essential issue as much as the place-making issues.

This explanation shows how ‘urban design’ is understood in a field. Urban design is not something only new or limited in contemporary, but it has been meaning ‘designing the city’ for at least over 100 years. Yet, as it has several traditions which have been generated depending on the ‘contemporary situation’ of each time, the meaning of urban design and its purpose could be understood differently.

In conclusion, ‘the meaning of urban’ could be understood with the current issues about cities, and therefore, the purpose or the meaning of ‘urban studies and urban design’ is also changing depending on the situation and various circumstances of each country. Nonetheless, there are globally shared issues for cities which have been affected by the industrialization and modernization. Although not all of the urban studies focused on the quality of public life, concerning public life is essential for the contemporary urban studies which is confirmed by current researches and its achievement.

As it was introduced as one of the traditions, contemporary urban studies deals with important sustainability issues. Nevertheless, in this thesis, public life is the main concern of the research. Thus, the use of the term ‘public life studies’ will be used in the thesis instead of ‘urban studies’ to specify the aim of the study and also the method of research in the entire urban studies field.

## 2.2 Public life studies

‘Public life’ and ‘Public space’

As it has been reviewed, public life studies focuses on literally ‘public life’ rather than on solely physical space, how it is operated or how it is shaped aesthetically. Yet, a space of the city is still considered as a crucial part of public life studies since public life occurs in that space. For example, in the modernized city, it was a city environment which brought a low quality of city life to people. The space of the city was what was formed by people, but it was also what formed people’s life. Thus, public life studies necessarily involves the study of the space surrounding public life. This ‘space’ is called ‘public space’. It is explained, “...Public space is understood as streets, alleys, buildings, squares, bollards: everything that can be considered part of the built environment” (11) Like it was described before,

public space as the background in which enables public life to happen had been once regarded as less important, but since the 1960s, its great influence on the quality of city life has been considered globally and cities are competing to generate sound public life throughout well-made public places in the city.

Observation as a fundamental method of public life studies

It is mentioned earlier that public studies around the world started with looking at public life. It was not by analyzing the situations with a statistic or scientific method but just by looking at public spaces. For the sake of technology development, new tools have been developed and used for the contemporary urban studies such as GPS, Space Syntax and online inquiries. Those tools make it easier to gather the quantitative data widely in a city and to access as many people as possible and listen to their opinions. It is obvious that such tools provide distinctive information which was not attainable with mere observation.

However, on the other way around, the observation method also brings findings which are not available when those tools are used only. Gehl argued, “Life is diverse and unpredictable, and its nuances and complexity cannot really be captured by automated methods of collection”.(12) Alan Jacobs also “believed that observing the interaction between public space and public life rather than simply looking at static drawings or maps would prevent many of the unfortunate decisions and actions that influence people’s lives.”(13)

To observe public life in the city is not something limited to professionals but rather once overlooked way to research. That’s why anyone who is interested in could join it like Jane Jacobs and that’s also why other contemporary urban professionals failed. Thus, observation should be prioritized for any public life studies.

Observation in public life studies and its tools

Observation itself is not an invention of public life studies as it is described that the idea of Camillo Sitte was also grounded in extensive empirical observations at the end of 19th century. (14) Yet, its character was different from the observation in public life studies since it focused on an artistic or visual expression of public space rather than the people’s lives or behavior. As the public life studies is differentiated from the whole urban studies field, observation in public life studies could be understood differently than the regular observation. Because the word ‘observation’ could mean basically observing any things without a context, the ‘observation in public life studies’ need to be distinguished from regular usage of the term ‘observation’.

Thus, there are various tools for systematic observation in public life studies such as counting, mapping, tracing, photographing, and writing a diary, and so on. (15) These tools reveal that the main concern of the public life studies is about the people in a public space; how many people are there, what they are doing there, do they enjoy the city, which places in the city people like to stay, which street they like to use, etc. Several of those tools were chosen in this re-

Achievements of public life studies in Copenhagen

search depending on the site and the matter of concern after basic observation.

Since public life studies started, they have changed public spaces in cities around the world. Copenhagen is a famous city for its vibrant public spaces and the quality of city life. It is a good example to see the success of public life studies when it comes to the implementation of the research. With Gehl’s lead, advocating ‘let it be a human scale and put people first’, public life studies has been conducted and implemented in a real-life environment consistently, which made now Copenhagen such an attractive and vibrant city.

According to the book *How to study public life by Jan Gehl*, in 1960s, there were separate fronts who were concerned with the city’s environment. One consisted of public life researchers in academia and the other was a group of people working for the city including planners and politicians. Although both groups started their own work individually, an interaction between them was made since Copenhagen is a relatively small society. While the exchange was ongoing between them, the way of thinking about city planning development became naturally influenced by the result of public life studies. Consequently, public life studies became an established part of city planning. The mayor for city planning in Copenhagen said that “Without the many studies from the School of Architecture, we politicians would not have had the courage to carry out the many projects to increase the city’s attractiveness’.(16) This demonstrates how much public life studies is crucial for city planning and it also shows the public life studies could make a substantial impact when it cooperates with an actual operating group not remained in the research area.

The similarity between Copenhagen and Helsinki

Copenhagen is similar to Helsinki in terms of its climate, size, and national characteristic as Nordic countries. Some might say that Nordic people don’t really need lively public life. In 1962, when the street Strøget in Copenhagen was also in debate whether to be changed from a street for cars to a street for pedestrians, it is said that ‘many people were so skeptical and even newspaper headlines were ‘We are Danes, not Italians’ and ‘The use of public space is un-Nordic.’’(17) However, the positive result is visible in Copenhagen that the street is so vibrant with pedestrians and bicycles users, and other public spaces such as parks, public pools are full of activities. This reveals that enjoying public life is not exceptional for people in the Nordic countries.

In terms of using public space in winter, both countries have not been extremely active. It seems that it has been out of concern for them until now, and they just got used to the dark, long, chilly winter. In Denmark, there is also a voice for the improvement of winter public spaces. It is written in the Danish blog called ‘A vision for a livable Winter City How can Copenhagen and other “winter cities” be livable all year round?’ that Danish people lack livable public spaces not only for the summer but also for the winter. Thus, some initiatives

have started to emerge, and even city officials are becoming aware of the importance of this issue. (18) However, there is not a visible outcome for such issues yet.

## 2.3 Basic activities in public space

Public space is the place where public life happens. By reviewing the activities in public space, the meaning of public life could be specified and the aspects of public life in this thesis can be understood in detail.

Necessary activities, optional activities, and social activities

According to the book *Life Between Buildings*, the activities in public spaces are categorized into two basic activities, necessary activities, and optional activities (19). Since the activities observed in the city are certainly relevant to the behavior of moving outside of people’s home, these activities are classified depending on the purpose of visiting the place. Necessary activities include compulsory activities such as going to the workplace or school, returning home, and also daily tasks like going grocery shopping, whereas optional activities occur when people choose to go somewhere in a leisurely manner. For example, they are to take a walk, to see nice scenery, or to sit at someplace such as a cafe or a park.

In addition to these activities, social activities are introduced and they are highlighted among the activities since they are more directly related to the quality of public life. Since social activities are defined as ‘all activities that depend on the presence of others in public spaces’, (20) they are not separate from the two activities mentioned earlier, but they are rather ‘resultant’ activities from both of the activities. Thus, it is explained that when there are more activities whether it is necessary or not, the chance that social activities occur is also increased.

Even both of necessary activities and optional activities are sources for the social activities, the quality of certain public space depends on the amount of optional activities. While the necessary activities take place under all conditions, the optional activities happen under good conditions. Thus, when the quality of certain public space increases, the number of optional activities also increase, consequently it affects the number of social activities. When there are more of social activities, it forms affluent public life, which influences again the quality of certain public space again (21).

The lowest level of social activities

Since social activity occurs whenever there is more than one person, its character is varying depending on the relationships of each other and also on the

Streets as a stage for social activities

places it happens accordingly. For example, social activities in public spaces, for example, near residential areas, schools, or workplaces, would be intimate interactions such as greetings, conversations, playing and so on. It is because they know each other or at least they share common interests. On the contrary, social activities in city centers, where there are more chances that unknown people meet, would be more superficial than the former case as people usually don't know each other and they just see and hear others (22).

Interestingly, this 'seeing and hearing' which is the lowest contact form occurs all the time when there is an opportunity to meet other people regardless of the intensity of interaction. And as it occurs naturally by just being with others and as a way in which we sense the world, it seems less significant in public life experiences. However, 'seeing and hearing' needs to be considered as a significant way to experience the world because of the same reason. Regarding this matter, Gehl maintained that passive contact 'seeing and hearing' offers 'an opportunity to be with others in a relaxed and undemanding way'. Furthermore, it is prerequisite for the interactions of other levels and also it becomes a source of inspiration and offers stimulation experiences (23).

In addition to the importance of 'seeing and hearing' as a way of public experience, walking is also one of the fundamental factors to enhance social interactions in the city. As most of the activities in public space involve walking (mentioning as a note: for those who use wheelchairs, walking means their movement with wheelchair in the context), it is not merely functional behavior to move around, but rather a crucial way to experience the world in a way that combined with seeing and hearing experiences. With saying 'Life happens on foot', Gehl explains that when a child takes its first step, everything in the child's world such as field of vision, perspective, overview, pace and opportunities is upgraded (24). Surely, walking enhances the experience of seeing and hearing others with changing the situation continuously and choosing what to see and what to hear. Meanwhile, the walking experience is also supported by what is seen and heard.

As such, activities such as seeing, hearing, and walking are basic but crucial factors as a starting point to get social interactions and connections, and as a result, to enjoy public life in the city. Slow strolling is one of the examples for a combined activity of seeing, hearing and walking. After defining it as an activity 'to see and be seen', Ali Madanipour continued by stating that it is 'a symbolic and expressive, as well as functional, exercise, a complex urban ritual that cannot be reduced to a single interpretation.' (25)

By examining the basic activities in public space, it is explained that the social activities happen whenever two people meet and the lowest level of activity such seeing, hearing and walking is a crucial factor to experience public life. Consequently, the street is a place that social interactions happen most frequently

in an undemanding way and the quality of public life is determined most among the public spaces in the city.

In terms of the role of streets in enhancing social interactions, Allan Jacobs argued in his book *Great Streets* that a great street is composed not only of physical characteristics for 'the functional purpose of permitting people to get from one place to another and to gain access to property', but also should provide an opportunity for socialization and participation in a community, in other words, great streets 'bring people together, help build community, cause people to act and interact, to achieve together what they might not alone' (26).

## 2.4 Urban life in Helsinki

Urban life

Although the focus of this thesis is on public life, the current chapter covers 'urban life' in Helsinki the examination of urban life can provide a better understanding for public life as a background.

As the word 'urban' can refer to any situation within a city whether it is pleasant or not, connotation of 'urban life' could be something positive or, it could be a negative reminder of the problems usually generated in a city. When it promotes a positive feeling to someone living in a city, it could mean that the person is enjoying the city environment which might have been designed well or even if it had not been designed well, it may be ongoing to be modified continually. Whereas, if it gives someone a thought to escape from it, the person might not be proud of the city environment or not be aware of a pleasure that the city gives.

While its neutral meaning could be translated subjectively depending on people's experiences, anyone who is living in an urban environment wants to enjoy their life in a city. Cities are also competitively investing for the better urban living environment not only to make it favorable to their citizens but also to attract tourists or investors for various reasons.

The high quality of urban life in Helsinki

According to a survey conducted by Monocle magazine, Helsinki was highly ranked for the best quality of life among the cities all around the world: 10th in 2018 and 6th in 2019. This annual survey has been conducted for 13 years and measures 60 metrics ranging from serious issues of living to more light hearted questions such as 'what will a good glass of wine cost you?' (27).

For the factors that make high quality of urban life, the way of moving in the city is highlighted. While proximity to nature and public transportation including cycling system were mentioned, ski tracks built by the city and public



It has not always been like this

saunas were also introduced because they enable winter outdoor activities. And not only its functional environment, but also cultural aspects were praised such as a growing number of young designers, a vibrant startup scene, and festivals with city government subsidies (28).

While it is hard to imagine that the urban life of Helsinki was not very admirable before, the urban experience in Helsinki during the 1970s and 1980s was described by Cantell in 1999 (cited in Lehtovuori 2005) as ‘a rather dull, uninspiring, even severe urban appearance, a city that could not be described as an exciting urban hub...’Urbanism as a way of life’ was relatively underdeveloped, and Helsinki lacked sophisticated urban characteristics, such as the civitas of public places, crowds, cafés and informal street-life’ (29).

Lehtovuori continued stating that in the 1980s, which was a long time after independence from Russia in 1917, the inherited role of built environment to display the power of its governance was still characterizing Helsinki’s urban space. As a result, ‘the meanings of public urban space were given from above, practices were regulated and the urban atmosphere was lacking fun, spontaneity and vibrancy’. As not only the city government but also citizens were aware of its boringness and emptiness, they did actions to make a way for changes and innovations since the early 1990s (30).

The products of hard work

When you consider that it has not taken a long time for Helsinki to obtain a reputation as high quality of life, it could be assumed that people who were living in Helsinki around that time wished their city to be changed and they put their effort so hard to achieve that change. The people of Helsinki contributed to it, some of them as professionals in the official institutions with the power to implement a good idea to be materialized while others as citizens with doing what they can do such as initiatives.

Lehtovuori argued that even the efforts of grassroots are usually more recognized than those of a city, the actual difference was made by the city government because it fostered the changes with planned action since the early 1990s. In 1992, the General Master Plan was approved during the time that the economic recession was ongoing and unemployment rates started increasing. As the authorities realized that Helsinki needed to increase its ‘competitiveness’ in Finland and abroad, ‘Helsinki started to actively market itself, polish its image and create links to financial and cultural exchange networks’ (31).

While many examples are listed for change such as ‘relaxed licensing policies, pedestrianization, beautification of streets and squares, indirectly subsidizing inner-city shopping through traffic infrastructures, and urban events’, Lehtovuori emphasizes the role of urban events because it fosters the vibrant image of a city and increases the number of people on city streets, thus making it possible to experience the ‘urban street’ where strangers meet in a crowded

The way people enjoy Helsinki

setting in the style of European street culture. Most importantly, urban events bring about a somewhat unexpected change, altering citizens’ mindsets toward urban public spaces with its challenged meaning and use patterns (32).

The changed mindset towards urban environments is clearly depicted in the book *Helsinki Beyond Dreams*. Published in 2012, the book introduces a thriving grassroots culture in Helsinki. Those living in Helsinki are passionate about making their city a better place to live and will voluntarily do whatever they can contribute. (33) The way of enjoying city life is through their actions and even in difficulties by taking courage.

However, grassroots cultures are mostly for summer which is the time they can gather easily in pleasing weather. Unlike the whole city becoming a playground with events and festivals in the summer, it is not visible how the citizens are enjoying the city in winter. Even the public life is not noticeable in winter, they have their own way to spend their time quietly and individually such as gathering in a small group, staying indoors, going to the sauna, and going skiing on the frozen lake. While it explains that Finnish people are managing well to live in a winter city, it also supports the needs for improving winter public spaces. Winter activities such as going skiing or skating are limited to a certain time, to certain people, or to a certain place. Something is necessary for more people to let them enjoy their daily life in a city. As it is in summer, thriving culture needs to be visible and to flourish in winter as well.

Out of urban, cottage culture in summer

The way of enjoying summer time is not only by gathering together in urban areas, but also y retreating individually in the countryside. There is a tradition of second homes which is called a summer cottage (Finnish mökki). During this time, Finnish people could have long holidays in summer and some people even spend 3-4 weeks at their cottages.

While the summer retreating time in absolute terms is undoubtedly beneficial, the wintertime in a city seems to heavily contrast with it. Mänty Jorma, the editor of the book *Cities Designed for Winter*, argued in his article ‘The winter factor in Finnish urbanism’ that ‘in the situation of today, and from the majority’s point of view, the countryside in a summer environment and the city is the winter environment...regarding when and where people spend most of their time, the city is always a “Winter City”’ (34). As the time when the article was written was in 1988, which is the time before the urban places were less recognized for people to enjoy city life on it, it is hard to say that the Helsinki city environment is primarily designed for the winter. Since the 1990s, urban culture has been thriving so that now people know how to take more pleasure from their city environment ever than before, and thus, Helsinki is not only for the wintertime but it is a loved urban place with full of events and people in summertime. Nevertheless, it seems undeniable that people mostly spend their

time in a city more in winter than in summer because of their long break during the summer.

Related to the idea that the countryside in Finland is a summer environment and the city is the winter environment, Lipsanen argues that the earlier studies have not been identified the existence of a group of people who spend ‘their summers sailing or at summer cottages but use public green space in the winter’ (35). This demonstrates that there has been less consideration for the people who love nature and activities to let them enjoy their wintertime in the city. Even though the article is focused on green public space, it is not far from the direction of this thesis since one of the important reasons for a high quality of life in Helsinki is the proximity of nature which is a restricted opportunity for winter.

Need for researching winter public space

There is not only a lack of research for the specific user group as Lipsanen indicated, but it was difficult to find any kind of the research on public behavior or public spaces during wintertime. With regard to this, Jorma Mänty argued that ‘despite the fact that winter has only been of marginal importance in all urban planning, structuring, and design, it should be remembered that winter necessarily and recurrently exists’ (36). As the vibrant urban culture and public life in public spaces usual before but have been achieved through the actions, winter public spaces need to be analyzed for their improvement.



HELSINKI BECOMES A PLAYGROUND  
WHEN THE WEATHER ALLOWS!

# 3 Methodology

## 3.1 Walking and observation

As described earlier, observation is an essential tool for public life studies. As long as the basic activities such as seeing, hearing, and walking are considered crucial for public life, using them as a tool of public life studies is natural. In this thesis, as the main method observation, ‘walking’ is also used. Even though observing occurs naturally when walking, it is necessary to mention ‘walking’ as a method since its effect upon the research was independent.

Basically, walking is more dependent on observation rather than the other way around in terms of a method for public life studies. Let us suppose that each happens alone. The meaningful observation could be done in a fixed place without walking, although it is necessary to move to that place which could be done possibly by walking. On the other hand, walking without observation would bring only limited results for public life studies. Thus, walking could not be the main method for public life studies, but it could upgrade the observation as an assistant. This study will demonstrate how walking affected the process of observation.

## 3.2 Into observation

What to focus

The public spaces around Helsinki central railway station were observed. Among public spaces, the street is focused on how it is used. The street on the park and square is also included for the target area. In the beginning, a literal street was primarily studied, but during the observation process, the target area was expanded to a larger area, which shows one of the findings of observation that park and square in winter Helsinki operate mainly as a passage. However, it also indicates that the park or square generally functions as a walking passage ‘street’, although generally the park or square is classified distinctively from the street by its physical appearance or functions.

Challenging points

Firstly, before starting, it was doubted whether any meaningful research could be done with observations since the public life in winter is easily imagined without actually seeing it that people may just walk fast and no one will be outside. Secondly, even when the area of study was determined, it was difficult to specify it and what to focus to see. Tools were ready but it was not clear when to use and how to use. With these doubted minds and uncertainties, the observation was started.

### 3.3 The process of observation

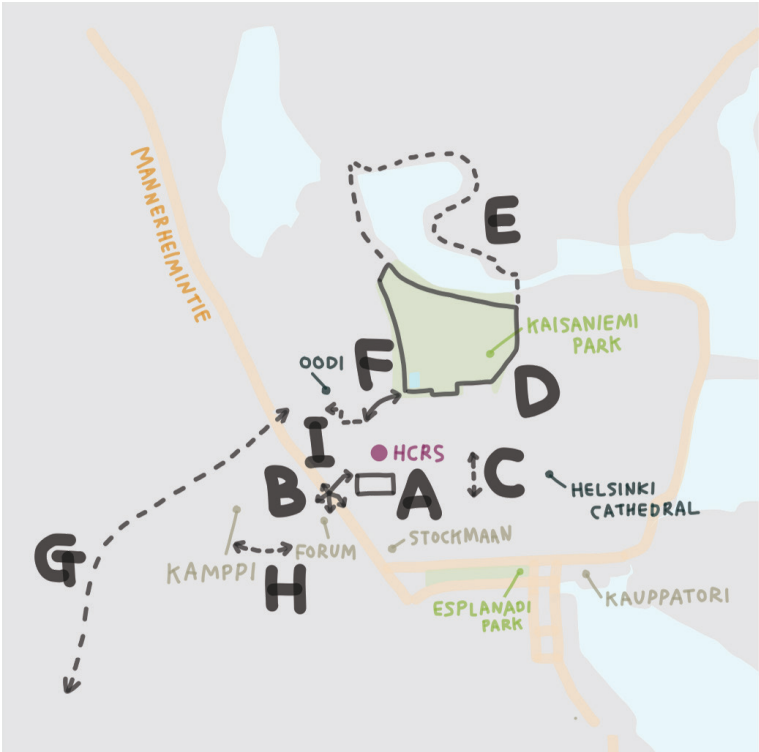
Although there was no predetermined plan, a plain observation with walking was preceded by the notion that ‘there will be some underused public space already built but with the potential to be a better public space for the wintertime’. Photographing and keeping a diary were done almost every time of observations from the first observation day. During the entire process, sites for systematic observation and specific tools for it were determined. Further details on how they were determined are described below.

	Date	Place*	Focused on	Tools
1	22.10.18	A	Space	
2	01.11.18	B	Space	
3	07.11.18	C+D+E+F+G	Space	
4	13.11.18	B+A	Space and behavior	Counting (+Mapping)
5	15.01.19	H	Space	
6	23.01.19	F+D+E	Space and behavior	
7	24.01.19	D+E+I	Space and behavior	
8	26.01.19	D	Space and behavior	
9	31.01.19	D+I+G	Space	
10	05.02.19	F	Behavior	Counting
11	07.02.19	B	Space and behavior	
12	12.02.19	F+B+A	Behavior	Counting, Tracing
13	14.02.19	F+B+A	Behavior	Counting, Mapping
14	16.02.19	B+D+A	Space and behavior	
15	19.02.19	D+C+I	Space	
16	21.02.19	D	Space and behavior	

\*The places were named in alphabetical order, according to the order of the visit

\*\*HCRS: Helsinki Central Railway Station

\*\*\*HUMS: Helsinki University Metro Station

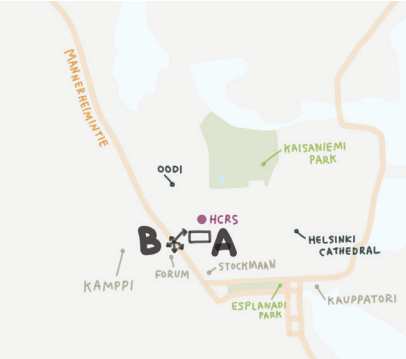


- A** Underground space of HCRS\*\*
- B** Underground intersection street between HCRS and Forum
- C** Underground street between HUMS\*\*\*and Yliopistonkatu
- D** Kaisaniemi park
- E** Walk path around Kaisaniemenlahti and Eläintarhanlahti
- F** Underground street between HCRS and Kaisaniemi park
- G** Baana bicycle route
- H** Underground street between Forum and Kampi
- I** Platform street between HCRS and Oodi

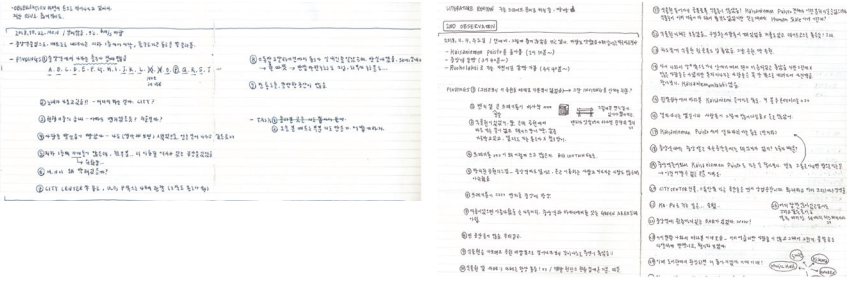
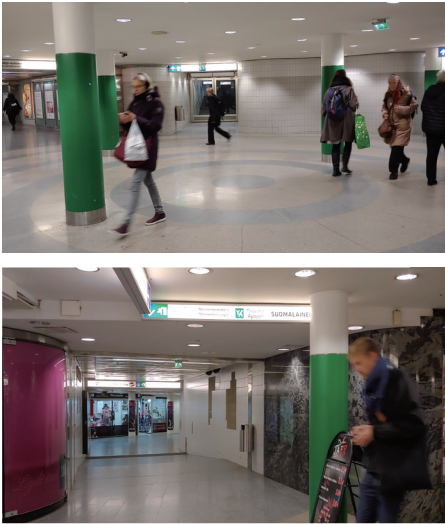


Focused on the spaces rather than the behavior of people, the first three observations were conducted. Unlike what was concerned before, actual observation in the early phase told that many things could be discovered through plain observation, which is not attainable with merely a guess. This experience had been continued to the end of observation process. From interesting points that were found during these times, it became easier to establish the questions and hypotheses for further systematic observations with tools.

1 22.10.18  
2 01.11.18



The first and second observations were conducted in underground streets around the Helsinki central railway station since there was a personal assumption that the underground street has the most potentiality to be a better place for wintertime as the place is protected from the weather. For sites A and B, it was found that there are many exits than I thought, so I wrote down all the exits with drawing map to understand the site. From this work, I started to wonder how many people are using each exit and how it will change during the day.



DURING OBSERVATION, I MOSTLY TOOK PHOTOGRAPHS AND WROTE DOWN EVERY THOUGHT AND FINDING UPON OBSERVATION.



THERE ARE FEW PLACES TO SIT; IT SEEMS THERE HAD BEEN MORE, BUT THESE HAD BEEN REMOVED. STAIRS ARE ALSO USED FOR SITTING.



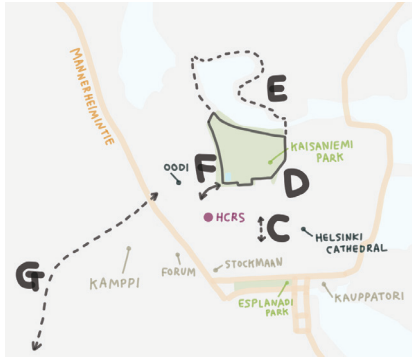
BEHIND THE STORES, THERE IS AN EMPTY SPACE, WHICH IS UNDERUTILISED.



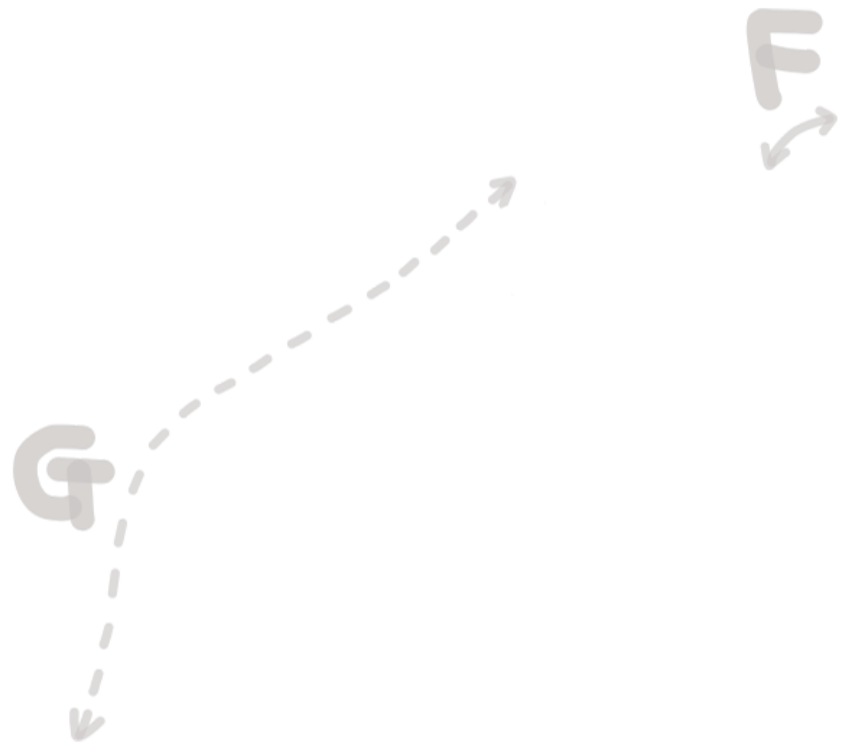
A NUMBER OF EXITS.



3 07.11.18



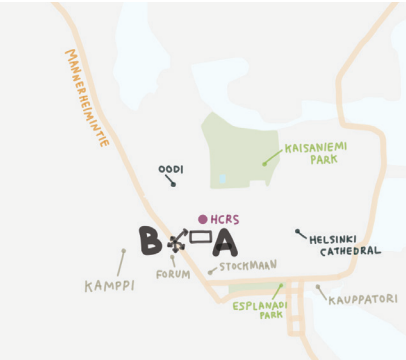
Meanwhile, walking on the streets led the observation to other areas that were not considered before. For third observation, walking guided the way to other streets near A and B. It is assumed that there was curiosity intuitively to see what is there. Unlike my first thought that the only underground street will be worthy to be observed, the use of other sites were correlated to the use of sites A and B. To walk outside in a cold weather let me emerged into the situation and experienced the place as one of the city dwellers. Walking enabled the re-search area to be enlarged instead of being limited in a certain space that was determined already. Furthermore, the view of the public space takes on a participant's, rather than an onlooker's, aspect.





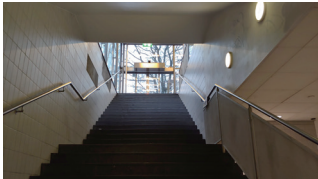


4 13.11.18

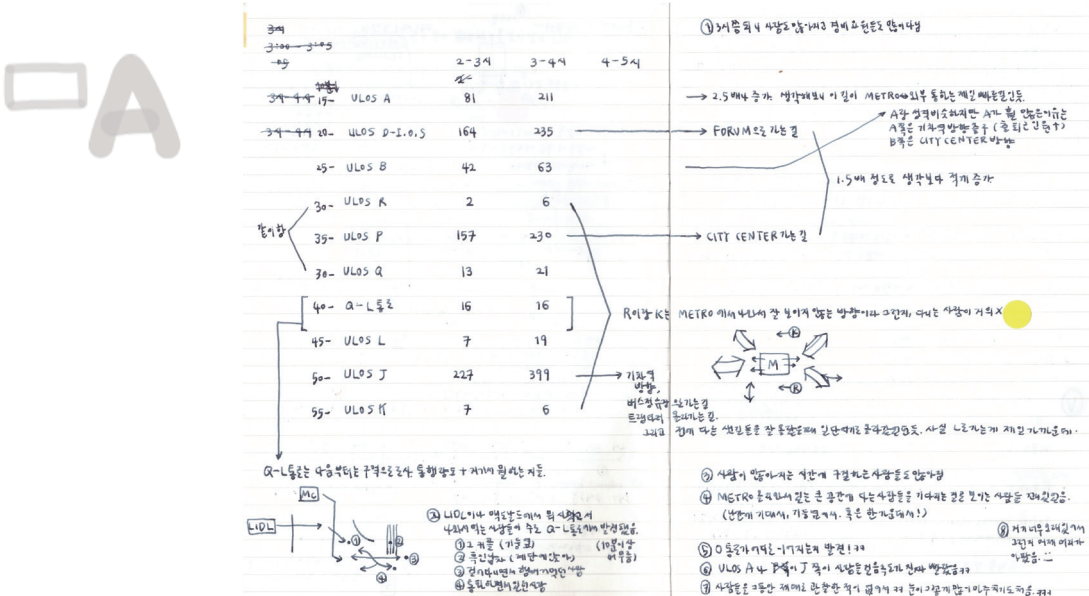
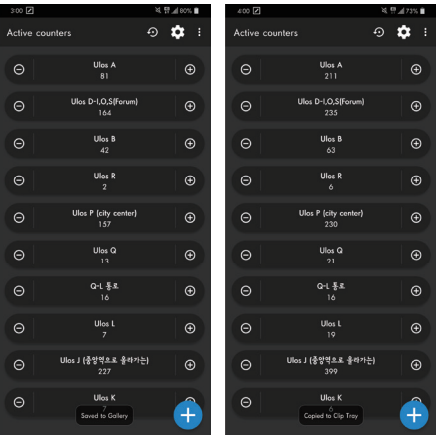
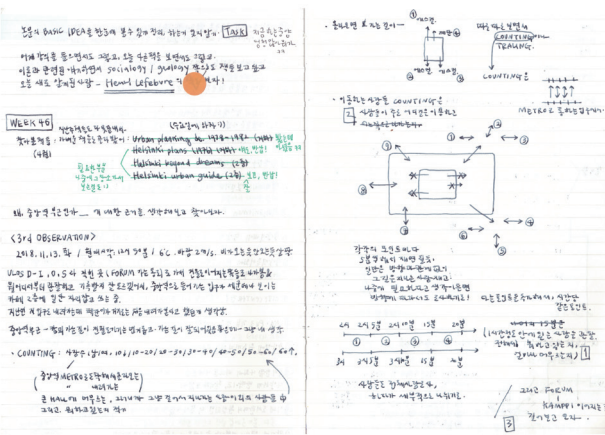


With the consideration for the other areas, site B was visited. After this, the counting for the underground area A was planned and made as a trial at 4th observation. As it is discovered by previous observations that there are many passages and accordingly also many exits from the underground place of the railway station, the numbers of people who use each exit were counted for 5 minutes, two times with 1-hour difference. According to the book How to study public life, to obtain a picture of daily rhythm, counting numbers for 10 minutes every 1 hour is recommended. (1) As there are too many exits to be counted, I planned to count the number of people for 5 minutes. I did this only two times with a one hour difference because I was not sure for the site to research the public life.

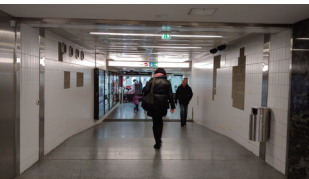
Comparing the data helped to closely examine the spaces, even there are only two times data to compare. The exits which all looked just busy with people before counting became distinguishable each other with their different locations and therefore, their different roles either. However, after this observation with counting, it seemed not crucial to count the number of people who use the exits whole day and I didn't know how to develop the systematic observation for site A and B. Thus, I decided to continue the plain observation for other sites than proceed to deeper research.



AS I WAS NOT SURE WHICH PATH WAS CONNECTED TO WHICH AREA, IT WAS A KIND OF EXPLORATION. I FOUND A SHORTCUT THAT I HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY KNOWN ABOUT.



SOME PLACES REMAINED UNUSED AND EMPTY.







5 15.01.19



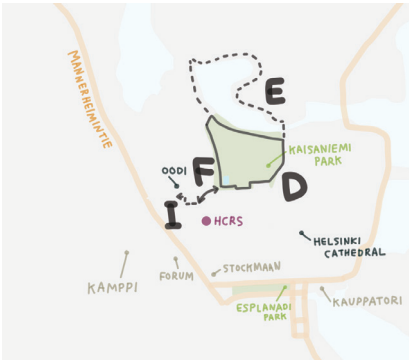
Another underground street between two shopping malls, Kamppi and Forum, was visited since it was also one of the places considered for research from the beginning. As the street is long and its mood was not pleasant, there was a fast flow of people to each direction. Even though it does not have an inviting mood for pleasant walking, it seems that a street is a good option to avoid harsh weather. There were few people who were sitting at nodes. After checking the place, it was decided not to include the place to researching areas since the journey through walking did not bring inspiration for further observations or any ideas for the site.



WALKING WITH THE FLOW, I ESCAPED THE PLACE AND VISITED THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OODI WHICH JUST OPENED. ALTHOUGH IT WAS CROWDED WITH MANY PEOPLE WHO CAME TO SEE THE NEW PLACE, IT WAS GREAT TO SEE THAT PEOPLE WERE ENJOYING THE WARM AND COSY PUBLIC PLACE. THERE WERE VARIOUS SPACES FOR PEOPLE TO STAY AND SPEND TIME ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS.



6 23.01.19  
7 24.01.19



Unlike the initial plan to examine mainly the underground street, the Kaisaniemi park and walking path next to it (site E) were considered as a site for research and they were explored again. There were some people walking around in spite of the cloudy and cold weather, which was not predicted.

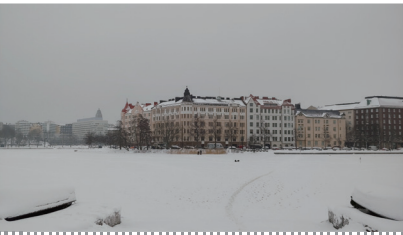
The next day, the weather was sunny and it led me to the same site as the day prior. Even the temperature was lower than the previous, the weather condition was good enough to compare the situation. While looking through the area (D+E), several findings were acquired for that area and the observation plan for F was being made as the hypothesis was attained which is that street F is used mostly by the commuting people.



DURING THE SEVENTH OBSERVATION, MANY PEOPLE WERE OBSERVED TO PASS BY IN THE PARK AT 16:00 HRS. ALTHOUGH THEY WERE JUST WALKING QUICKLY, THE PLACE LOOKED VERY VIBRANT. IT SEEMED THAT MANY COMMUTERS USED THE PATH THROUGH THIS PARK AND THEREFORE ALSO THE UNDERGROUND PATHWAY F.



I REALIZED THAT I HAD NEVER BEEN THERE IN WINTER AND NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT VISITING. DOING SO BROUGHT A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE.





THERE WAS A RESTAURANT WHICH I HAVE NOT SEEN BEFORE. WILL THERE BE ANY CUSTOMERS VISITING IT IN THIS WEATHER?



THE NEXT DAY, I WENT TO THE RESTAURANT AT LUNCHTIME. I DISCOVERED THAT IT IS A GOOD DESTINATION FOR THOSE PURSUING OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES; SOME OF THE PEOPLE ON THE STREET, AND WHO MADE THE AREA MORE VIBRANT, WERE COMING FROM OR HEADING TO THE RESTAURANT.

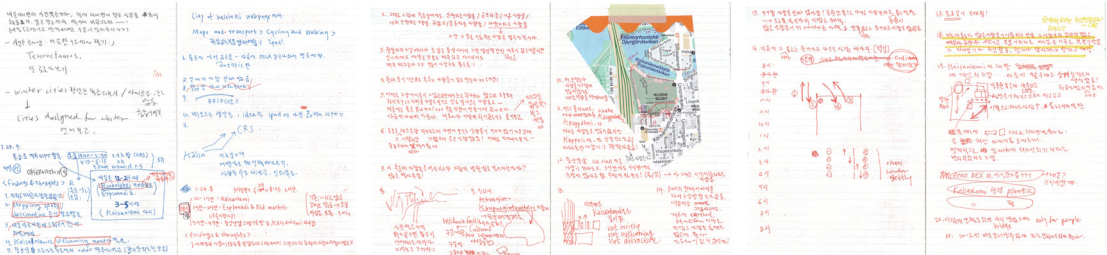


AFTER HAVING LUNCH, I WENT OUTSIDE. I HAD TO WALK WITHOUT TAKING A REST BECAUSE THERE WAS SNOW ON THE BENCH. ALTHOUGH I WANTED TO WALK MORE IN THE SUNSHINE, IT WAS TOO COLD TO BE OUTSIDE FOR LONG, SO I FINISHED MY TRIP AT THAT POINT. EVEN THOUGH I COULD NOT STAY FOR LONG, I VERY MUCH LIKED THIS PATH THAT I HAD NEVER VISITED BEFORE IN WINTER. IT WOULD BE NICE IF THIS PATHWAY WERE BETTER KNOWN AND USED MORE OFTEN.

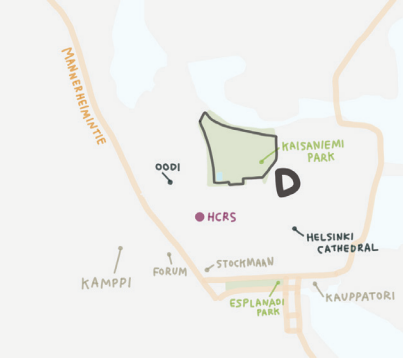
AFTER GOING TO SITE E, I VISITED ESPLANADI PARK TO FIND OUT HOW WELL IT IS USED. THERE WERE NOT MANY PEOPLE ON THE STREET, WHICH WAS NOT UNEXPECTED, AS THE WEATHER HAD BECOME OVERCAST.



WHILE IT WAS HARD TO FIND PEOPLE ON THE STREET, THE CAFES WERE ALWAYS CROWDED WITH PEOPLE.



8 26.01.19



Two ice rinks were visited and compared. Although it has a pleasant mood and nice location inside the park, it was compared to the other ice rink in front of Ateneum which was crowded with more people.



THERE WERE THREE PEOPLE ON THE ICE RINK IN THE PARK, AND THE LIGHTING WAS TURNED ON. IT SEEMED THAT THE CITY IS MANAGING THE ICE RINK WELL.



THERE WERE ONLY TWO PEOPLE SKATING ON THE ICE RINK IN THE PARK, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS A SATURDAY.



THE OTHER ICE RINK, IN FRONT OF THE ATE-NEUM, WAS EMPTY. WHEN I ASKED A STAFF MEMBER WHEN THE BUSIEST TIME WAS, SHE SAID IT IS THE WEEKEND. I THEREFORE PLANNED TO COME AGAIN ON A SATURDAY.

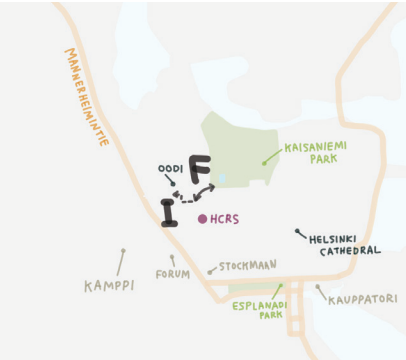
THE OTHER ICE RINK, IN FRONT OF THE ATENE-UM, WAS FULL OF PEOPLE ON THE SATURDAY.







9 31.01.19



The observation plan for site F was more refined throughout the observing the space. From the assumption that people will choose more of underground street than outside street, the number of people who use the underground street and outside of street between Kaisaniemi park and HCRS had to be counted. This time, the counting time was planned for ten minutes every two hours. I believed that counting for ten minutes will be more precise than five minute intervals. Furthermore, a one hour difference would be enough for practice how it works.



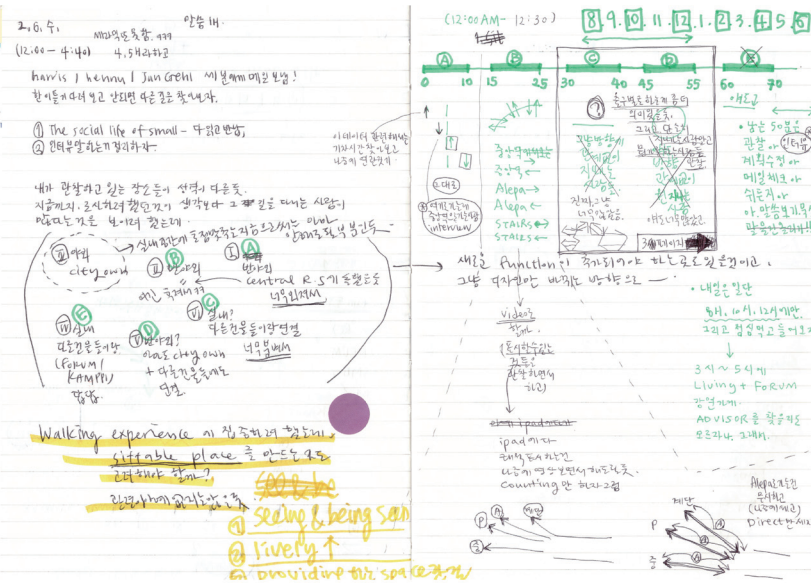
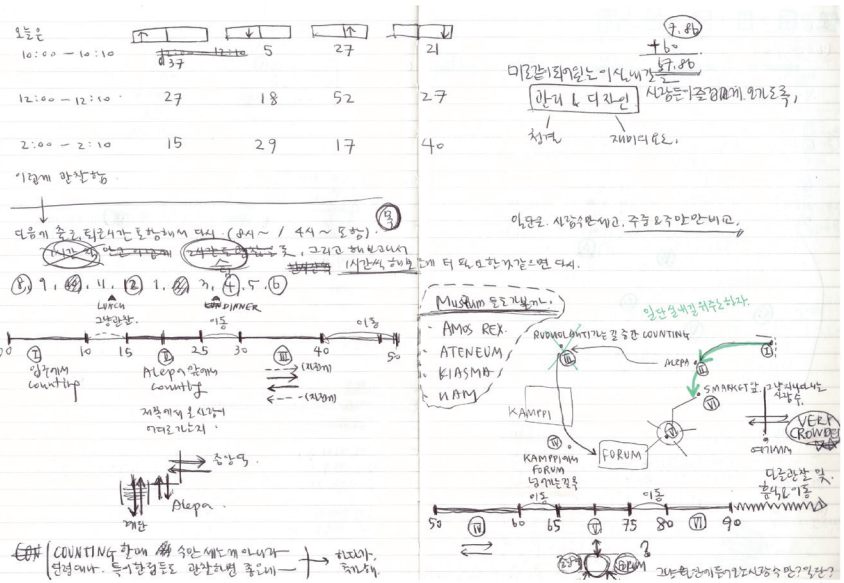
THE STREET I (BETWEEN OODI PUBLIC LIBRARY AND E) WAS OBSERVED REPEATEDLY, SINCE I HAD VISITED Oodi SEVERAL TIMES FOR PRACTICAL REASONS SUCH AS TO EAT LUNCH, TAKE A REST, AND SO ON. IT SEEMS THAT A SEPARATE ROAD BETWEEN Oodi AND KAISANIEMI PARK IS NEEDED INSTEAD OF 'E' AND 'I', SO THAT CYCLISTS DO NOT NEED TO HOLD THEIR BICYCLES ABOVE THEIR SHOULDERS OR PASS THE STATION PLATFORMS.



10 05.02.19



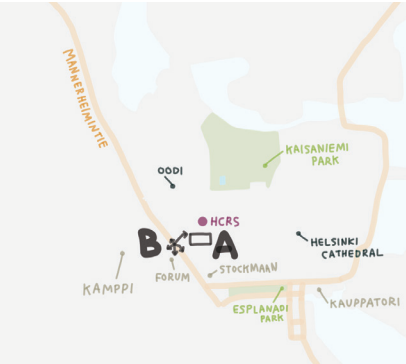
Counting was conducted at F (for 10 minutes, 3 times/ 10:00-10:10, 12:00-12:10, 2:00-2:10) and it refined the further observation plans. As there are many people who come from train station after the train just arrives, counting numbers on the ground level is needed. To compare how many people choose to use the underground street, a new counting place was added.







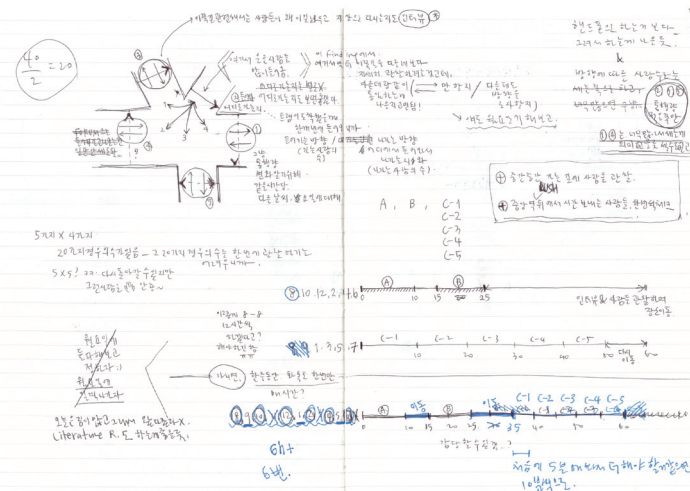
11 07.02.19



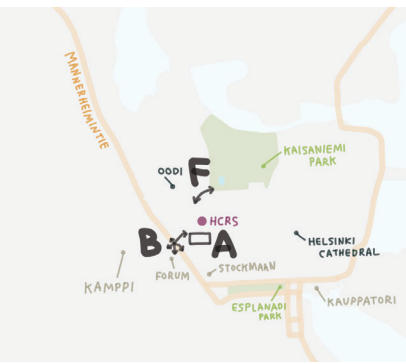
From the observation for site A and B, a counting plan for these sites was specified. For site A, rather than counting people who move through exits, mapping for people who sit, stand, and take a rest seemed to be more important to know how the place is used by them and what kind of public life happens there which will be done 13th observation. For site B, as there are many routes, counting takes more time and it is not possible to schedule them all in 1 hour. So, the counting has to be done with longer intervals, every two hours.



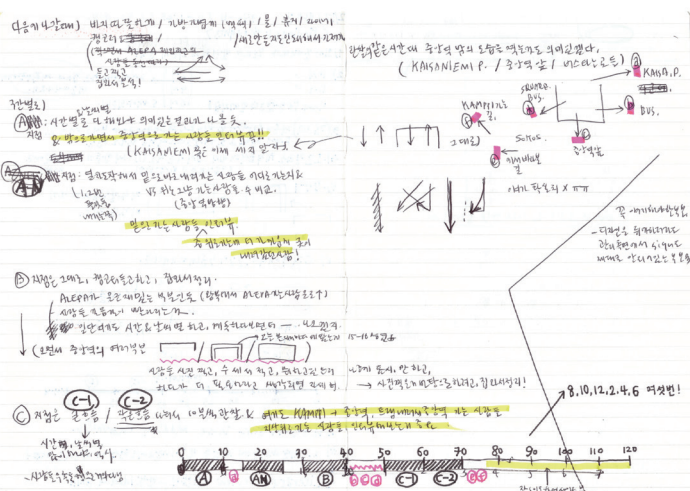
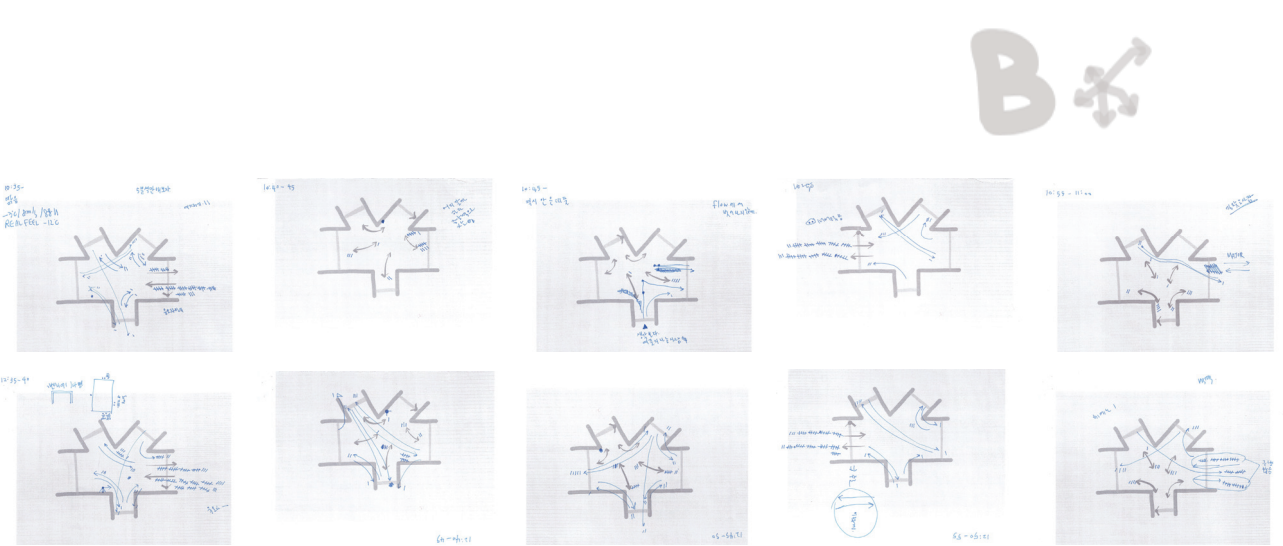
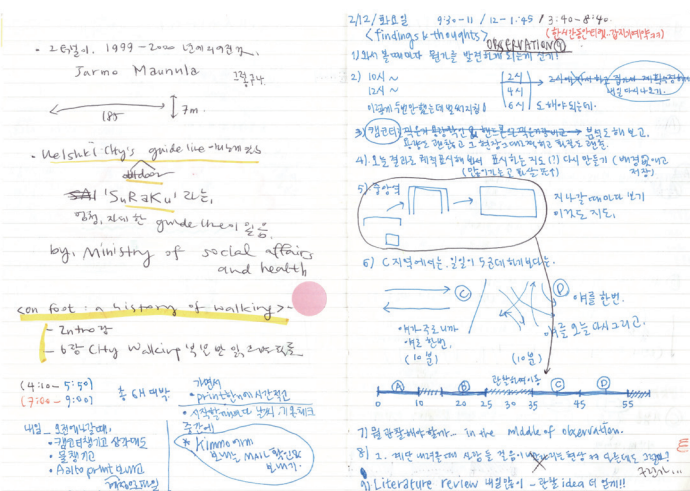
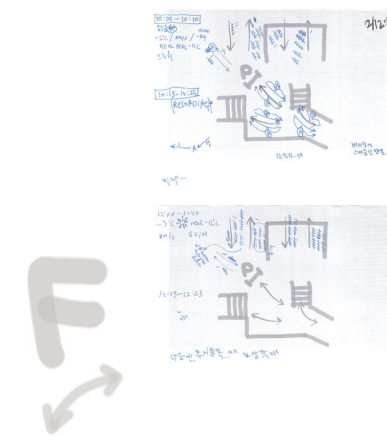
MANY ROUTES TO COUNT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE.



12 12.02.19

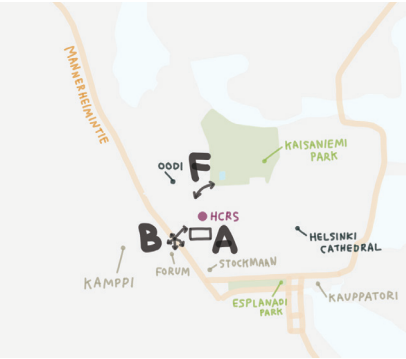


A planned observation for F+B+A was tried, but not fully implemented. From trial and error, the observation plan was refined. Counting the number of people at site B for every direction does not need to take 10 minutes each as there are some routes which is not busy, on the other hand, when there are too many people, it was hard to count. I started to trace people who I see rather than counting. From tracing the movement of people, there were mainstream of people between Forum and HCRS and the number of people who use the other streets were minor. I decided to count 2 times that the first for the mainstream of people and the second for the rest of them who use other routes.





The systematic observation for F+B+A was finally implemented as it was planned.  
The plan is:



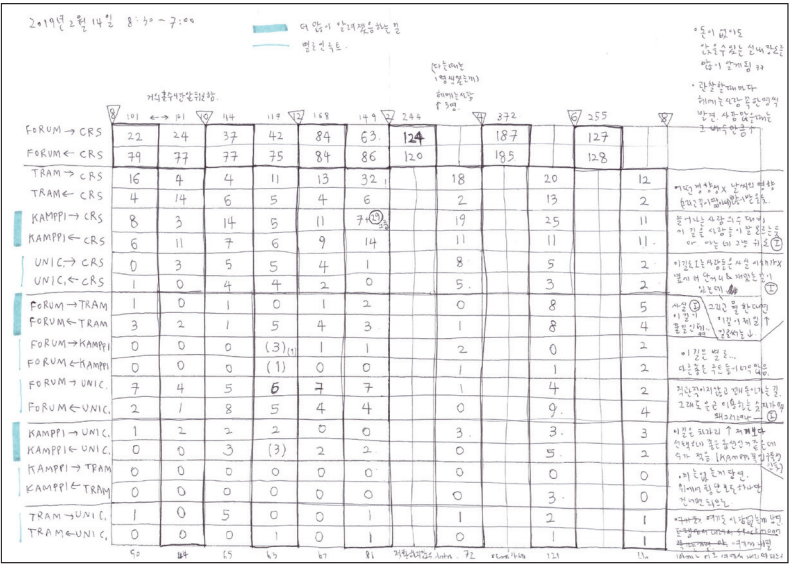
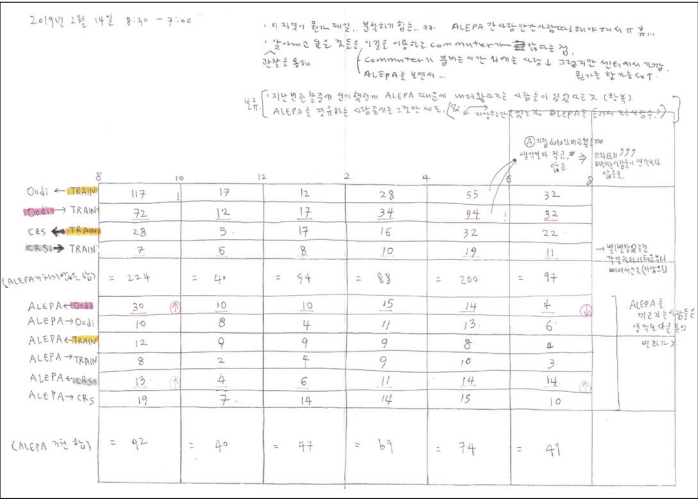
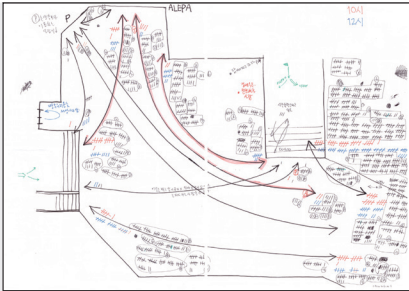
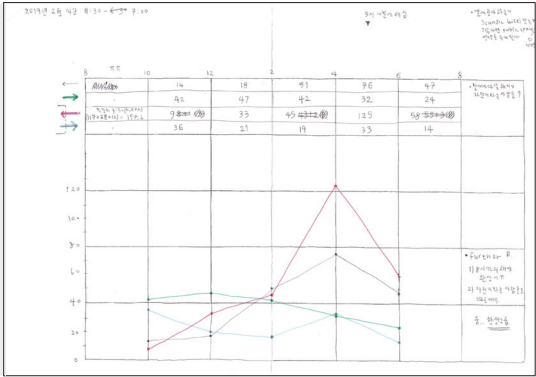
Place	Time*	Tools**	How
E1	8:00-8:10	Counting	Marking on the paper
E2	8:15-8:25	Counting	Marking on the paper
E3	8:30-8:40	Counting	Video taking****
HCRS***	8:40-8:55	Mapping	Taking pictures or marking on the paper
B	8:55-9:05	Counting	Marking on the paper
B	9:05-9:15	Counting	Marking on the paper

\*This schedule was repeated 5 times at sites 10, 12, 14, 16, 18.  
\*\*For streets, as it is the place people move, the counting is used for observation tool. But for the places in HCRS that people are sitting and standing, mapping is used to know how people act in a space.  
\*\*\*HCRS includes several places on the way from E to B including site A  
\*\*\*\*As the place is highly busy, video taking was performed and the number was counted after it.

8-10	10-12	12-14	14-16	16-18	18-20



Place	Result
E1	The counted number was drawn as a line graph.
E2	This result required additional research and therefore it was excluded, for further analysis.
E3	The number was deducted from examination of a video.
HCRS	People's behaviours were mapped, but this part was excluded for further analysis as it requires more detailed observation.
B	The results were set out in table form.
B	



14 16.02.19  
15 19.02.19  
16 21.02.19

For weekend, instead of same observation plan, a plain observation was conducted to determine how the central area is used. After that, to build the systematic observation for site D, the map was defined and the way that people were moving was observed.



ON THE WEEKEND, MANY FAMILY GROUPS WERE OBSERVED, WHO WERE OUT VISITING THE MUSEUM OR LIBRARY.

### 3.4 Lessons from the process

- 1) To find interesting facts starts from just walking in the city.
- 2) The more one goes out to observe, the more findings one obtains.
- 3) Findings from direct observation help to build systematic observation.
- 4) Systematic observation needs long preparation, including proto-observation.
- 5) The importance of social activities and interactions between people was proven during the observation process.



BEING IN A PUBLIC SPACE AND LOOKING AT PEOPLE MADE ME FEEL ALIVE, EXCITED, AND HAPPY - ESPECIALLY WHEN LOOKING AT CHILDREN PLAYING ON THE SNOWY HILL AND OR WHEN WATCHING FAMILIES SPENDING TIME TOGETHER IN THE CITY AT THE WEEKEND. I FOUND THAT IT IS TRUE THAT PEOPLE LIKE TO SEE AND BE SEEN.

WHEN I WAS MOVING AROUND THE CITY CENTRE, I WAS THANKFUL FOR THE MANY UNDERGROUND ROUTES. THIS EXPERIENCE MADE ME THINK MORE ABOUT HOW TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SPACES, ESPECIALLY WHEN SEEING PEOPLE'S NEED.



DURING THE OBSERVATION PROCESS, I GOT TO KNOW SEVERAL PLACES WHICH ARE AVAILABLE FOR TAKING A REST OR EATING YOUR LUNCH. ON SEEING OTHERS DOING THE SAME THING, I CAME TO CONSIDER A VARIETY OF PEOPLE, IN DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES, AND HOW THEY EXPERIENCE A CITY IN THE WINTERTIME.



- 7) It was verified that observation of the real world is important for public life studies. Observation with walking in the city determines what works and what does not work. Not just as an observer, but as one of the participants, the city was experienced. The findings from the experience are not something easily achieved by guess.

### 3.5 Limitations

As stated previously, the observation was not fully completed. For site F+B+A, if the systematic observation is done again for a weekend, there might be more findings from comparing data. Additionally, if the observation is done for the same area in summer, it could have bring valuable data for comparison with wintertime use. Nevertheless, the result of the observations and findings from them are still valuable to tackle the issues about public spaces during winter.

# 4 Findings and analysis

Throughout the observation process, specific sites were selected and examined, which are F, B, and D (Figure B). As the meaningful data was attained from the systematic observation (12th-13th for F, B), they are represented in this chapter.

For each site, the contents will be presented in this order:

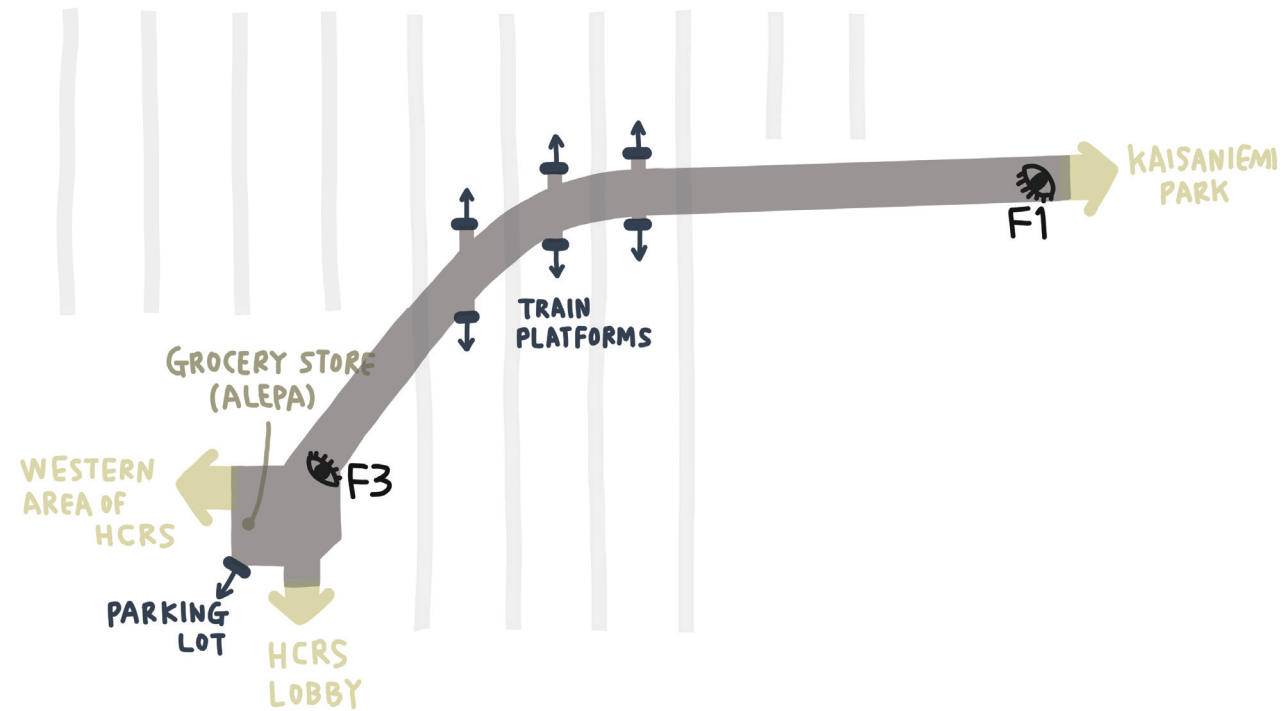
- 1) Observation data + findings from the data
- 2) Findings from general observations
- 3) Knowledge of the sites obtained by searching the internet or literature

For site D, because the data is insufficient, only findings from general observations and Knowledge for the sites by searching web or book are described. Out of the descriptions of the site F, site B and site D, analysis of these sites will be drawn in 'Discussion points from findings' parts.



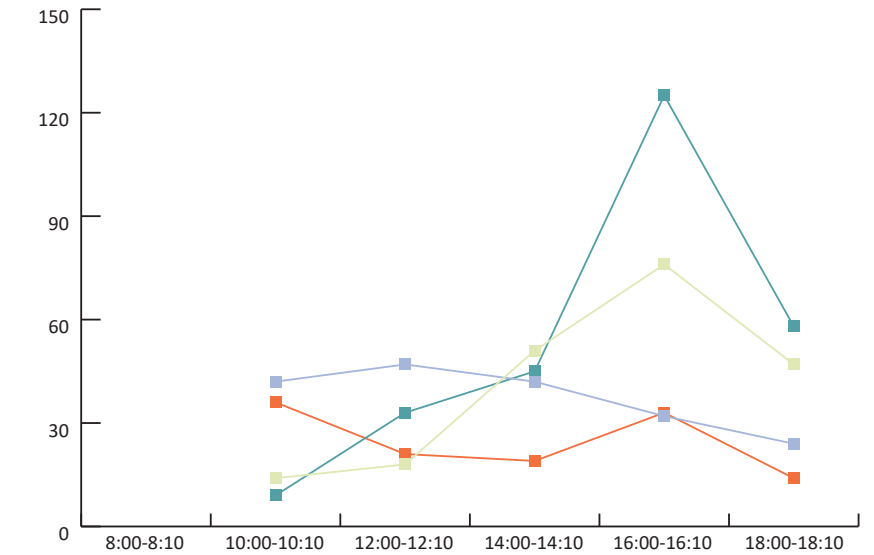
## SITE F

(Underground street between HCRS and Kaisaniemi park)



## 1) Observation data + findings from data

F1



■ FROM THE OBSERVATION AT F1, PEOPLE PASSING THE ENTRANCE TO THE UNDERGROUND WERE COUNTED.  
 ■ IN ORDER TO ALLOW FOR COMPARISON WITH THE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE WHO CHOSE THE OUTSIDE ROAD, PEOPLE WHO CHOSE THE OUTSIDE ROAD WERE ALSO COUNTED.

HOWEVER, AS THE TRAIN LANE 1-3 COULD BE REACHED EASILY FROM OUTSIDE, THE COMPARISON WAS NOT POSSIBLE WITH THE DATA OBTAINED FROM IT. (THE DATA FOR 8:00-8:10 HRS WERE MISSING, BUT IT IS ASSUMED THAT THERE MUST BE MANY PEOPLE AT THIS TIME - AS MANY AS AT 16:00-16:10 HRS - FROM THE GRAPH ON THE NEXT PAGE.)

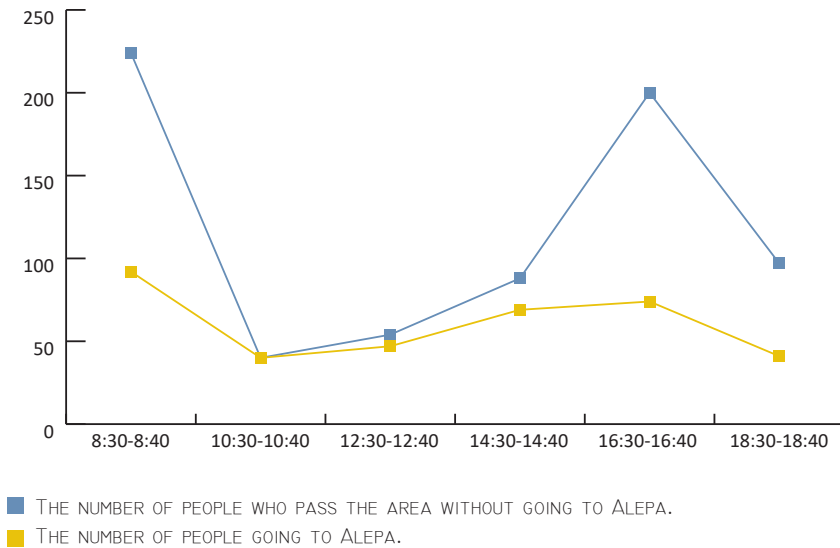
**Street for commuters:** According to the data, the number of people who passed site F was increased during commuting time. Even though it was expected that every street will be crowded during commuting time, site F as a street for commuting is differentiated from other streets, particularly when it is compared to the data of site B (p.59). The number of people at site B was relatively small in the morning which is different from this site, gradually increased and became highest during 16-17. After it reached its peak, it was not decreased soon as the data of site F was. It is assumed that this might be because of its location near the commercial area.

From this comparison of data, it is discovered that every street has its busiest time and it is related to its role, mostly depending on its location. There are many commercial places around the central railway station which means that the floating population of those streets is affected by the number of people who go to shopping or to restaurants. Thus, for street F, which is from the central railway station to the non-commercial areas, its identity is a street mostly for commuters, unlike other underground streets. There may be commuters who come to the central area of Helsinki to work from other regions, and there would be also some local people who live nearby the central railway station using the passage to reach their working area.





F3



**Alepa enhances vibrant mood of the place:** the small space in front of the grocery shop on Alepa was busy with people who visit there. The directions that people move were diverse which is compared to the other part of the site F which people just move one way or the opposite way along the long and dark passage. Unlike the number of people who do not go to Alepa was changing with big difference especially during commuting time, the number of people who go to the Alepa was comparatively stable. Even though the number was still affected by the number of people who pass by, for example, at 10:30-10:40 when there were only 80 people passed the area, half of them visited Alepa, which could explain that there are quite many people who come to the area because of Alepa.

Additionally, Alepa was providing some space to stay in front of the store, which was not found in the other parts of site F. It was observed that some people were eating food that they just bought, while others were waiting or calling on their phone. Even though there are not many activities occurring and it does not seem cozy to stay, the shop is making the place vibrant, and it becomes clearer when the place is imagined without a shop. The shop has a role in bringing vitality to the place. The problem is that the place is used by drunken people or smoking people by not being widely used.



ONE INDIVIDUAL WAS STANDING IN FRONT OF ALEPA FOR OVER FIVE MINUTES. HE ATE A SNACK, SORTED THROUGH HIS BAG, AND SMOKED.

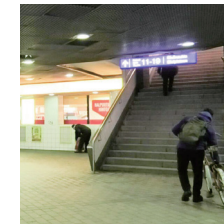
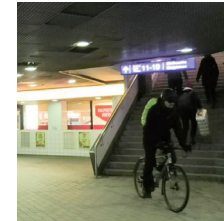


A PLACE TO STAY FOR A WHILE.

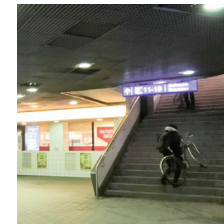


## 2) Findings from general observations

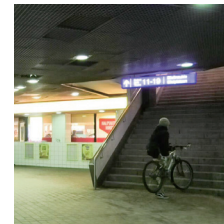
**Street F as a shortcut from Kaisaniemi park to the western area of HCRS:** By watching people who were carrying their bicycle on their shoulder, it was detected that the street is a shortcut from Kaisaniemi park to the western area where public library Oodi and Kiasma are located which is also a place that a bicycle road to Ruoholahti starts. The journey from Kaisaniemi park to the public library Oodi or bicycle road to Ruoholahti looked too complicated. To use the shortcut which is the underground street, bicycle users had to hold it on their shoulder to walk up the stairs and walk through the platform which is always busy with people who move vertical direction to their way.



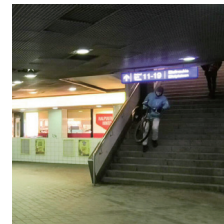
12:30-12:40



14:30-14:40



16:30-16:40



18:30-18:40

THERE WERE ONE OR TWO PEOPLE OBSERVED TO BE CARRYING THEIR BICYCLE ON THEIR SHOULDER DURING EACH UNIT OF OBSERVATION IN THE AFTERNOON.

**Lack of maintenance:** Even though the street was kept clean by regular maintenance, it seemed the location is out of concern for providing a sound public place to people who use there every day. The place in front of Alepa had an unpleasant smell and the broken and opened ceiling along the long street looked neglected. Generally, the street was too dark to be considered safe.



DAMAGED CEILING (LEFT)/ STAIRS LOOKED CLEAN, BUT THE AREA DID NOT SMELL PLEASANT (RIGHT).

## 3) Knowledge of the site

There is a plan for a new underpass which will be welcomed by pedestrians and bicyclers who used to use the underground shortcut. (1) Although a specific plan has not presented yet, this new street will provide a direct way connecting the eastern area and western area of central railway stations.



City Council approves plan for city centre underpass

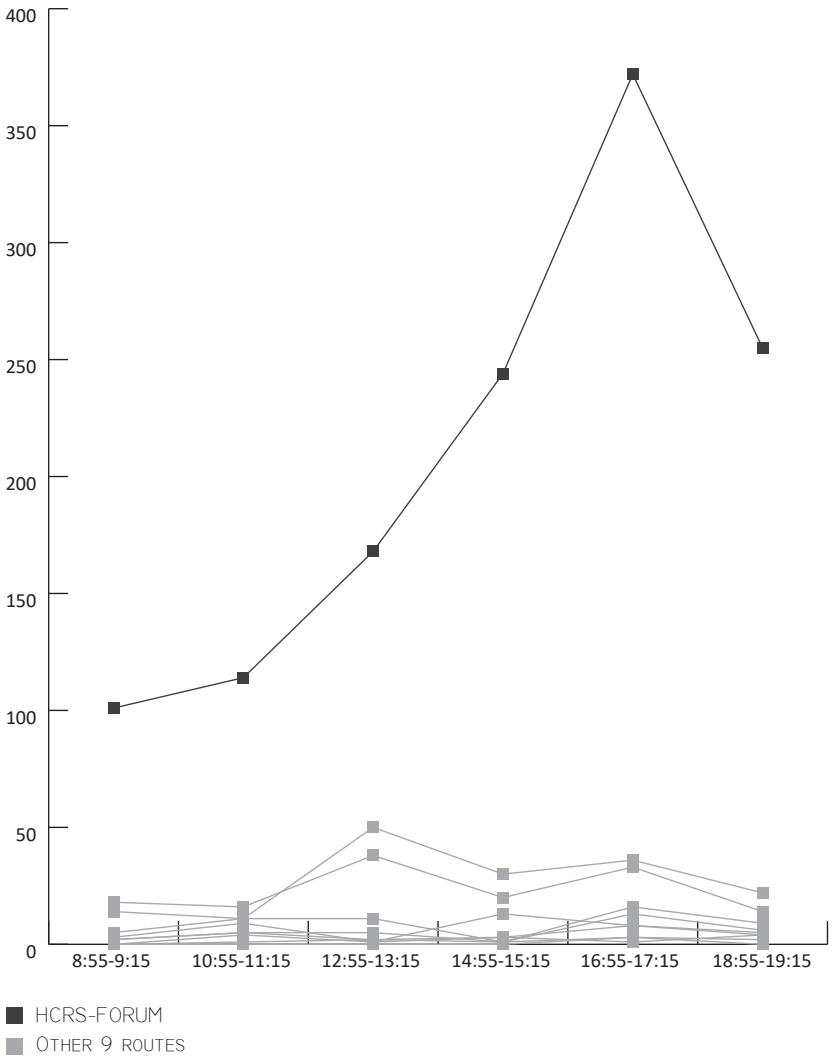
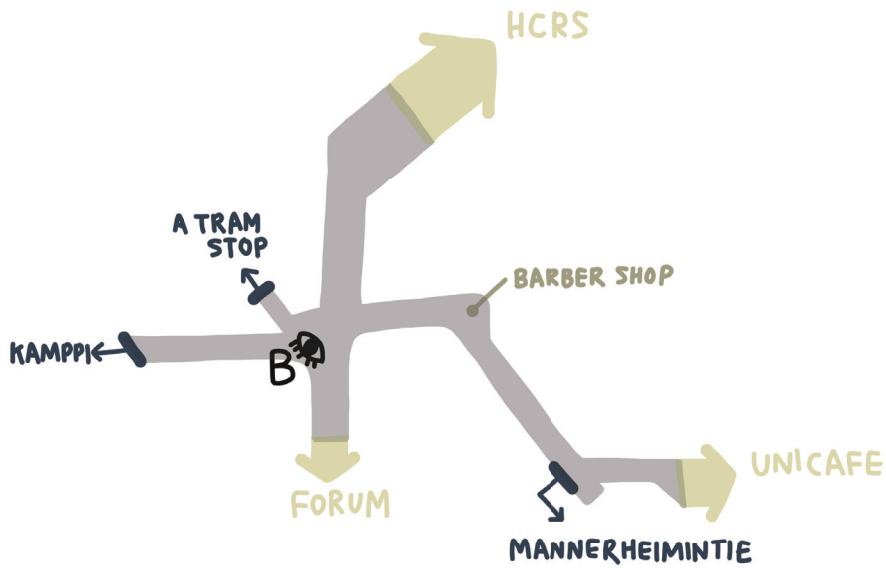
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1) Observation data + findings from data



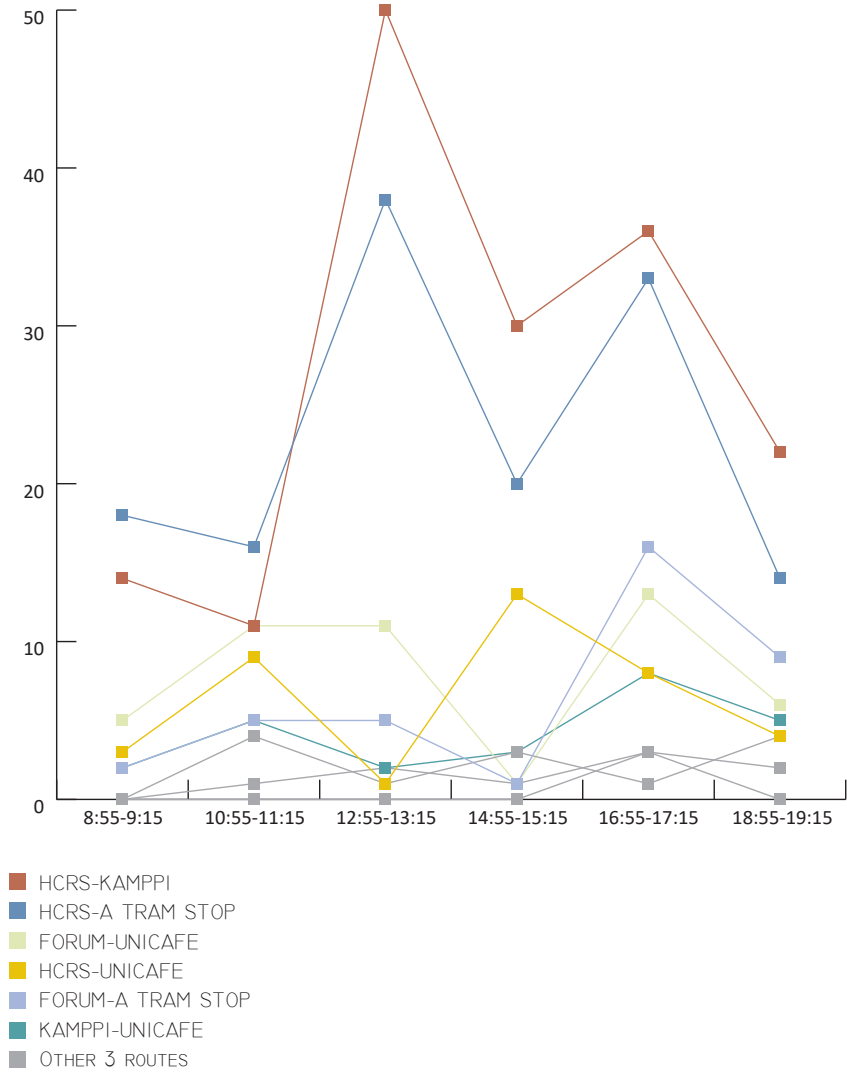
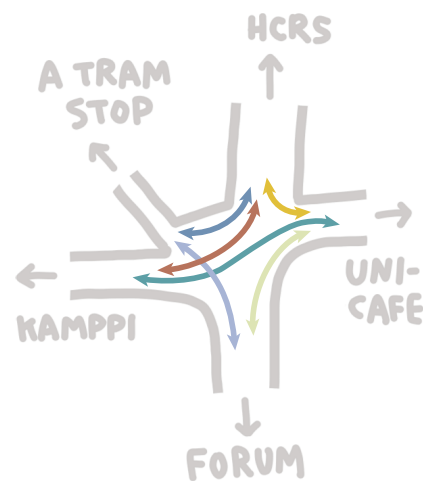
SITE B

(Underground intersection street between HCRS and Forum)



**A large flow between Forum-HCRS:** The data demonstrates that there is a large flow between Forum and HCRS. Set aside the data, the flow is very visible since its way to the Forum is direct from HCRS. Even not everyone's destination would be Forum exactly and not all the people were coming from Forum, it seemed that Forum gets a huge benefit from the connection to the underground street as it makes easy to get there from the HCRS, consequently from the metro station as well.





WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE MAJOR FLOW BETWEEN HCRS AND THE FORUM, THERE WERE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE OTHER NINE ROUTES; SOME WERE POPULAR, WHILST OTHERS WERE NOT USED VERY MUCH. FROM ANALYSING EACH OF THEM, VARIOUS FINDINGS WERE ATTAINED.

EACH FINDING IS EXPLAINED ACCORDING TO A SPECIFIC ROUTE. HOWEVER, THE FINDINGS ARE RELATED TO EACH OTHER AND NOT LIMITED TO CERTAIN ROUTES.

THREE ROUTES REMAIN UNSPECIFIED; THESE ARE NOT PARTICULARLY USEFUL AND ALSO NOT USED A GREAT DEAL.

■ **Routes were hidden:** The other nine routes were not clearly depicted in terms of which way connects to where. Among the minor routes, the way between HCRS and Kamppi was utilized the most (163 people in 10 minutes X six times). Even though the route is not highly visible from outside and there is no sign inside as well, this route might be used by people who know the way.



■ **Underground streets as an alternative option to avoid the harsh weather:** Not all of the underground routes are efficient. But using the underground could be good choice when the weather is harsh. The data demonstrates there were second highest number of people who used the route between HCRS and a tram stop (139 people for 10 minutes X six times). As people always enter inside as a group although they were not together, it explained that people who took off the tram were coming inside collectively. Surely, when the ground level street is observed, the winter weather did not look favorable to wait for the light changing to cross the street. Even the underground way is not direct and longer to reach the HCRS, it seemed to be worthy to be chosen.

**A visible way is used more:** Interestingly, the number of people who were heading from the exits near tram stop to HCRS were higher many times than the opposite way. For the reason that there are relatively smaller number of people who are commuting from HCRS to the tram, it may be because it is not highly visible from the main flow, especially when reaching the junction point from the HCRS. Or, maybe there are just few people who goes from HCRS to tram station. This requires additional observation.

	9:05-9:15	11:05-11:15	13:05-13:15	15:05-15:15	17:05-17:15	19:05-19:15
A tram stop to HCRS	4	11	32	18	20	12
HCRS to a tram stop	14	5	6	2	13	2

(The reason for the large flow between Forum and HCRS could be actual customers of Forum. But as it is described earlier, it could be also because the way is visible. People who seemed not familiar with the street were standing in the flow, looking around shortly to check which direction the other streets are heading, and finally, they chose the safe way following the flow, rather than exploring hidden ways.)

■ **People who know the way use the route:** The route from the intersection to the Unicafe is a long journey. There are no cafes or shops until it reaches the building, and the street remains abandoned. However, there were relatively more people who were using the street between Unicafe and Forum and the street between Unicafe and HCRS. Even though there are more efficient routes than these, the route was chosen by people who know the way.

■ **There are unknown effective routes:** The route between Forum and a tram stop and the route between Kamppi and Unicafe are relatively efficient ways when they are compared to the routes of ground level. For both routes, on the ground level, they require crossing the road two times. For the reason that they are not much used, it might be because they are not known by people and ground level street is more intuitively recognized and remembered.

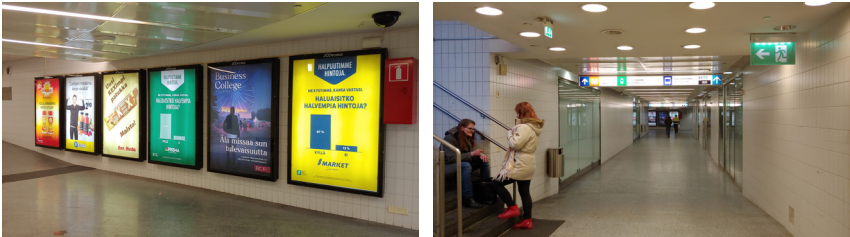


2) Findings from general observations

**No proper signs and not welcoming mood:** There was only metro sign and no sign for the HCRS which was written only in Finnish ‘Rautatientori’. For the people who are not Finnish, a large flow enabled them to find their way. There was at least one person who was lost and looked confused every 10 minutes during observation. The mood was also not welcoming people. It was a passage that people wants to pass quickly.



**Commercialization is prioritised over and above public life:** Walls along the streets were covered with advertisements and there was no proper place in which public life could flourish. However, this place has a potential to sustain public life, since people use the pathways of the underground and there are empty spaces available. There were a few people sitting and eating there. Even though it does not have a welcoming atmosphere, some parts of the street seemed amenable to re-design as somewhere to stop and take a rest.



3) Knowledge of the site

Underground pedestrian street has been constructed since the 1960s. The time was when it is predicted that private car traffic would be increased dramatically in Helsinki. By the construction of the underground passage near the railway station, the central pedestrian axis at ground level was removed for safety reasons (2). Right after the construction began, the plan of the underground street was criticized by Vilhelm Helander and Mikael Sundman which is described as ‘a drainpipe’ (Cited Hanna Hyvönen, 2017) (3).

Even though they are situated under the central area of the city so that it is used by people who use the transportation system such as train or metro and it becomes an alternative pedestrian street for winter, it was the one which is constructed by private individuals who owned the building near the street or property invest companies (4).

There is a future plan for expanding the SOKOS department at the underground of the railway station. It will bring changes to the existing underground streets (5).

SITE D and SITE E

(Kaisaniemi park and Walk path around Kaisaniemenlahti and Elaintarhanlahti)

1) Findings from general observations

**A passage for commuters:** There are several shortcuts with a better walking conditions than the route besides the vehicle road. The roads were well maintained so that walking on the street was not difficult when it was still icy.



**Nearest natural place from HCRS:** The park is the closest park from the central railway station, which means that it is the easily accessible nature in the center. Because it is connected to the lake, the walking passage in the park seemed important because it could lead people from the Kaisaniemi Park to the lake.



**Undervalued space:** Interestingly, some spaces in the park was being used as a place for construction workers, while other space was utilized for piling snow. It seemed that the park is used as a storage facility in winter. There is also a botanical garden next to the park. The park and garden could have been support each other, but they were in an unclear relationship. Although the direction of the facade faces the inside of the park, the garden is not able to be reached from the park, and there is not even a sign indicating the direction of the park. A tennis court in the park blocks the view of garden because it is next to the fence of the garden.



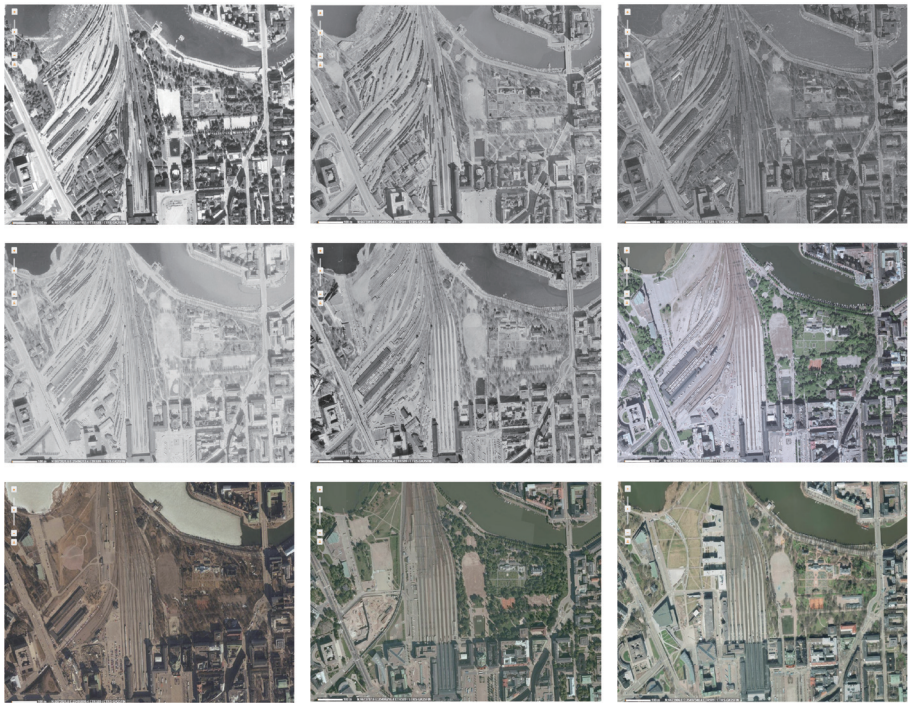


2) Knowledge of the site

Kaisaniemi Park is the oldest park in Helsinki founded in 1812. It has been a place for recreational events, festivals and concerts. (6) An ice hockey outdoor match to celebrate Finland’s 100th independent day anniversary was also held here, which indicates that it is an important place historically and a proper place to gather many citizens together (7).



However, it has not been changed since 1932 while the areas in the western part of central railway station have changed continuously.



PICTURES FROM 1932 TO 2018.  
(LEFT TO RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM.)

There was a competition for the site, but it has not been implemented. (8) It shows that City is also aware of the needs for changes.

Discussion points from findings

As a result of the findings, two conclusions could be drawn. It was experienced throughout the whole process of the observation that the available public spaces in winter are streets and commercial places, which seems obvious since any of other public spaces such as parks are not in use. However, by reviewing the findings of these public spaces and exploring related contents from literature, the following discussion will suggest that a new perspective towards these public spaces is necessary.

Streets

Commercial places

Streets in everyday use

According to the findings from observations, the observed streets are one of the common everyday experiences for people such as commuters or those living near the streets. It would seem obvious and natural that there should be a street which is used every day by people who are living nearby. However, ‘everyday use of the street’ could be an important aspect in winter cities.

Firstly, there are not many available public spaces in a winter city, but the street is utilized during winter. During the long and dark wintertime, the street becomes a possible public space in an exclusive manner. Although the street is used not for enjoying public life but rather for practical reasons to move or to walk for health, because it is used regardless of circumstances such as climate matters, it could be an important channel in winter that each person could experience the external world and interactions could occur.

Secondly, everyday experience forms a person's life. Even though the time in which they are situated in public space is not long, the point of everyday experience is that it is repeated and accumulated. If something happens regularly to someone, especially every day, it surely affects the person even though it is trivial. The importance of everyday experience is also maintained by Margaret Crawford in the book *Everyday Urbanism*. She argued that 'an amazing number of social, spatial, and aesthetic meanings can be found in the repeated activities and conditions that constitute our daily, weekly, and yearly routines' (9). Furthermore, everyday experiences from using public spaces shape one's perception of their existence in the surrounded environment. Regarding this, Edward Relph argued that 'they are important sources of individual and communal identity, and are often profound centres of human existence to which people have deep emotional and psychological ties' (10).

Therefore, a winter street has a role to provide a chance to experience public life and a better everyday experience. However, the 'street' has been regarded not as an important public space for wintertime but as a functional passage for moving. While their maintenance has been done well to make them walkable, the potential of the street for public life has not been considered. This might be because it is believed that people spend little time on the street in winter and it is a general use of the street in other cities. For a winter city, this assumption should be challenged, and instead, a strong will to utilize winter streets is required to make a more livable urban environment during wintertime (11). This should be done collectively through the governmental level. This is because public spaces are not controllable for individuals, although they affect everyday experience. Unlike the private living environment that one can determine, the greater environment than everyone experience is beyond their ability to shape.

#### 1) Underground streets

Usually, in urban design strategy, making a public life at ground level is preferable. Gehl also emphasized a 'one-story' city, remarking that 'everything important happens at ground-floor level, which helps concentrate urban activities' (12). Normally, it is desirable to have a ground floor level city life for general circumstances. However, under exceptional climate conditions, and as long as it is chosen by many people to walk through in wintertime, the use of underground needs to be regarded importantly and the condition should be improved.

Underground streets satisfy some required conditions to be a good pedestrian street for wintertime. It is argued in the article 'Winter cities: Restructuring the transportation-land use relationship' that 'pedestrians should be given legal right of way over the private car... The result is a creation of networks which are safer, more efficient and more pleasing to the eye' (13). According to this argument, the examined underground street already fulfils the first two conditions. It is safer than the ground level because the pedestrian flow is separated from the car traffic and it provides efficiency by connecting places directly under the ground without waiting for the traffic lights. When the winter road becomes icy and slippery, underground streets stay dry so that people could walk safely with their usual speed. However, it does not seem to fulfil the last requirement 'pleasing to the eye'. As the argument is continued that 'street furniture, lighting and landscaping should be an integral part of the pedestrian walkway to make it more attractive, especially during long and grey winter days' (14), it reminds one that the Christmas lighting is brightening outside during the dark winter. Yet, as coldness limits public life in winter, the underground street needs to be carefully designed down to the details such as furniture and lighting to the whole view that pedestrians could see while they pass through so that public life could occur in that place during the cold winter months.

For the first two requirements, there is room for improvement as well. Uncontrolled design and maintenance do not look reliable and maze-like composition of the street remains hidden and unknown. Lack of information misleads people in the wrong way and makes them wander. To some people who already know the way, it is a safe street to walk separately from the car traffic, while to the others who are not familiar with it, it gives the impression that it is not safe to explore.

#### 2) Not only the protected areas but also open areas

In winter, it is preferable to use a protected space than an opened space. Nonetheless, it was observed that commuting people were moving from place to place and local people also came outside to take a walk. Being outside in winter sounds unfavorable, but when there is no other option, it has to have an inviting mood for basic activities such as walking and seeing so that it will enhance everyday experience during winter. Walter H. Kehm also maintained in his article 'The landscape of the livable winter city' that 'the challenge for land use must be extended to the open space' (15).

Basic settings which are beautiful during winter in Helsinki are already present. From observation, it was detected that there were people who visited the Kaisaniemi Park and the walking path around the lake to take a walk with their dogs or baby stroller even in cold weather. As mentioned earlier, the walking route for site D and H has beautiful scenery and it is the closest nature from the central area. Those walking routes need to be highlighted by applying different design strategies than the usual park. This idea is supported by Xenia Zepic, who also suggests that

‘in order to encourage walking, especially in a northern climate, different design criteria and policies should be examined and/or implemented according to the location and the nature of the pedestrian desire lines’ (16).



**Commercial places**

Commercial places are the most significant part of public spaces in wintertime Helsinki. In the literal sense of the word, they cannot be regarded as public spaces because they are owned by private entities and their purpose is also to make a profit. However, in terms of the actual public life that occurs there most in winter, it functions as an important public space in winter. Among various commercial places, large shopping malls such as CityCenter, Forum and Kamppi are the place that social interaction could mostly happen in winter. Because they are connected to the metro stations directly through the underground passages, they are the most easily reachable destinations in winter. The journey to get there does not require to endure harsh weather and in there, a bright light allows people to forget about darkness and warm and cozy mood welcome people to walk and stay. Furthermore, various products and events give an excuse to linger. Therefore, such large shopping malls are crowded, especially during winter, with people of all ages, which induces a vibrant mood unlike any other places outside.

Usually, the accessibility is the factor by which private space is distinguished from public space. Unlike a public space, which should be accessible for everyone and should not exclude anyone, a shopping mall does not need to be accessible for all. It is not intended to be public space for the common good, but rather is a place for obtaining profits. Thus, there must be control to maintain conditions for their customers and some people are excluded who may cause problems, such as homeless people or drunken people. However, this control is not exceptional to private spaces. For the common good, those people are also controlled in public spaces.

Complete private space should be controlled fully. Thus, the accessibility of a shopping mall becomes rather problematic. Although it is accessible for most people, except a few persons who may cause trouble, its usability depends on financial ability. In other words, the place is open for everyone but proper use of the place is available only for someone who has the ability to pay to use it. Consequently, the accessibility of such large shopping malls generates a discrimination problem. They easily exclude the poor or anyone who wants to stay in public without spending money. This might not be a problem in a capitalist system. However,

in a distinctive climate, a large shopping mall as a place for public life is worthy to be discussed. In reference to the picture below: It does not afford any place for youngster groups who want to enjoy various activities rather than just sitting in the cafe or buying good. In Kamppi, there is a place used as a meeting point and it is used for events and festivals that are accessible for all. However, when it is considered that there are not available public space outside in winter and the location of shopping mall is the core in the city center, the quality of allotted space for public use in a shopping mall should be improved.

Because commercial places including large shopping malls have limitations as a public space, it should not be underestimated or perceived as the counterpart of proper public space. When there is a commercial space, people visit there for many reasons such as shopping, meeting friends, or just looking around. Thus, by having commercial places in the city, any place with it or within it becomes meeting points and it generates social interactions and public life as well. When commercial places such as shops or cafes are considered separate from public space, they bring the vibrant mood to public spaces, for example, shops along the street or an ice cream shop near a park.

Gehl explained this effect with the term ‘soft edges’. A city’s edge means ‘the lower floor of buildings which has an influence on city life’, especially on walking experience in the city (17). Depending on how the edge is formed, it becomes a soft edge or a hard edge. The softness of the edge is an important factor to generate vibrant mood to the public space near it. When the street is more attractive, more people gather, and consequently, more social interaction happens. While he pointed out that the aim should not be on ‘creating as much life in the city as possible in as many places as possible’, Gehl stressed that it is not difficult to find a desolate urban area and it takes ‘careful and concentration effort to ensure a combination of lively and quiet places in the city’ (18). Even though he did not open up the discussion from the commercial place, many examples of soft edges except those in the residential area demonstrate that soft edges are well-made street environments supported by commercial amenities. Therefore, the commercial place has a positive role in bringing liveliness to the street when it works as a soft edge. Apart from this soft edge concept, it is hard to imagine walking in the city if there are no shops or cafes. As it is written in the blog of the PPS (Project for Public Spaces), ‘markets, vendors, and retailers are essential components of many great places’ (19). Ali Madanipour also maintained that ‘public spaces become an essential part of the regeneration of cities through promoting retail development’ (20).

Although it has been normal to have a commercial place in the city since the city was built and there is a positive side to have it, commercial places have a negative impression in the modern world. Then, what is the point that contemporary commercial places are to be criticized?

It is because of prevail of commercial places under the market-based



paradigm which tends to lead the loss of the public space. It could be explained through Madanipour’s description of the relationship between the economy and public space in his book *Whose Public Space?*. After the economic prosperity of the 1960s and the decline of it in the 1970s, economic growth in the US and UK was stimulated by ‘market revival and competition’. It became ‘market-based paradigm’ which dominated the structure of the society, which means ‘Radical de-industrialization, reduction in the size of the state, privatization, individualization, globalization and liberalization of the economy’. This paradigm shift had affected the urban design for its planning and development of the city to get huge influence by the private sector. Therefore, public spaces have been privatized by individual investors and undermined by local authorities. (21) As examined before, the underground street between HCRS and Forum is an example of the neglected public space because it is owned by individuals. Even though it is used publicly, public life is not present. Hyvönen explains that ‘the privacy of spaces manifests in the numb conformity, incoherency and fragmentation’ (22).

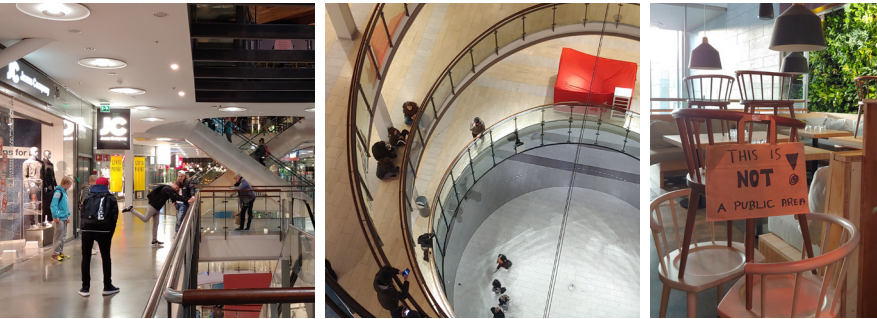
Contemporary commercial places not only suppress the development of public spaces with their dominance but also refuse to be a nice public space themselves. A large shopping mall is the best example of this. When it comes to the street as a place for public life, social interaction occurs in any street when there is more than one person. The large shopping mall which has many streets in its building is not an exception to this. However, public life in it is not rich compared to the commercial area on the main street in a smaller city or in a village. There are two reasons for this: firstly, the large shopping mall does not have ‘a soft edge’ effect. While the soft edges enhances public life on the street with various facades and different purposes of the buildings, the monotonous design of the shopping mall which actually does not have ‘the edge’ just let people individually concentrate on the activity ‘shopping’. Secondly, the big shopping mall is not community-based. Unlike the traditional Mainstreet in the village or a smaller community and the owners of the shops are the residents of the town so that it has its own identity, which also enables people to have an undemanding and informal public life, there is no identity to a large shopping mall and people who do not know each other just walk on their way rapidly. When the shopping mall is built, it is planned by a small number of people for a large number of people in the city, and it is not mingled in the city environment but stands there as a whole. It is just situated in the middle of the city and becomes a focal point to gather without any context.

In terms of this issue, Madanipour stressed that there is no need to have false romanticization of historic public spaces as any public space has deficiencies. Since the nature of public space in the city center has been changing, it is just the character of the contemporary public space that it is integrated into the service economy which relies on a consumption-driven basis. Therefore, today the quality of public space is fundamental to support a consumption mechanism. (23) Return to the subject, despite the fact that the community-based main street is admirable

and its soft-edge effect is desirable, it should be recognized that it is inevitable to have a large shopping mall in a growing city.

While a large shopping mall could not be a sound public space because it does not provide for a rich public life and it is not intended for all, small-scale local exchanges such as a vendor still support everyday activities in a public space, which demonstrates that democratic public space exists in the commercialized modern city and this is how democracy works in it. (24) Unfortunately, in winter Helsinki, the weather does not allow such things to occur.

In conclusion, rather than criticizing the commercialized city environment, discussion is needed to foster vibrant public life in contemporary public spaces under a market-based paradigm. Commercial places from a large shopping mall to small vendors are deeply related to public spaces. Thus, in the winter city of Helsinki, it should be noticed that public life in winter is dependent on commercial places, especially large shopping malls. Thus, it should be examined how much the public spaces are supported or invaded by commercial places.



TEENAGERS (LEFT AND MIDDLE) AND  
A RESTAURANT'S SIGN WHEN IT IS CLOSED, 'THIS IS NOT A PUBLIC SPACE' (RIGHT),  
IN KAMPPI.

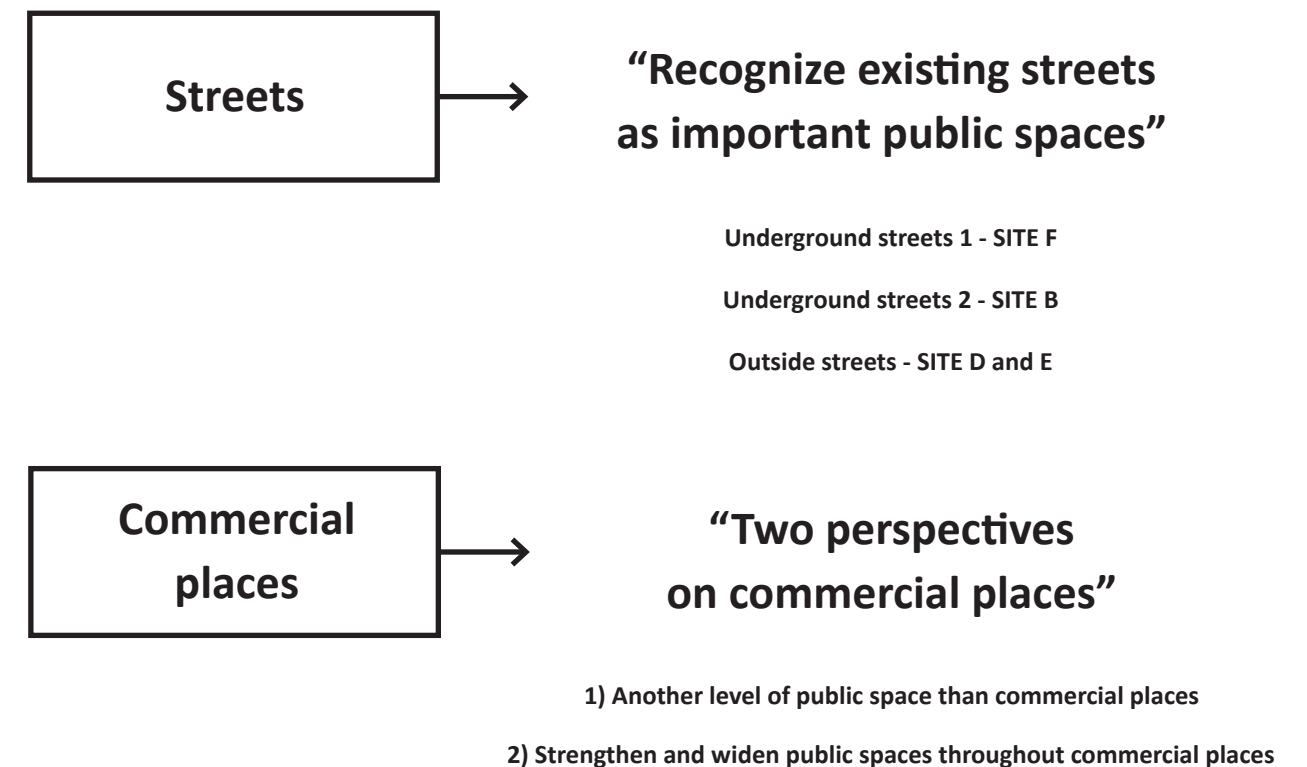
*“Public spaces are shaped not only by claims,  
but also by the absence of claims, by withdrawal from the public sphere.  
Withdrawal from public space may be due to a fear of crime, mistrust of other  
social groups, and intensified social polarization.  
This withdrawal is reflected in neglect and decline, poor maintenance, accumula-  
tion of waste and refuse, or lack of care and attention.”*

-Ali Madanipour (25)



# 5 Design ideas

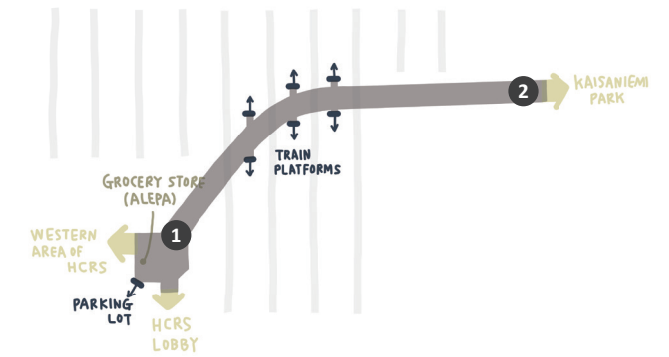
It has been discussed that the ‘winteriness’ of Helsinki requires a different perspective on public spaces, which would be distinguished from the general understanding of public spaces in other countries. To specify this, design ideas have been suggested with two parts according to two discussion points which described before: Firstly, the ideas for the examined streets are described with reference pictures and simple drawings to depict the idea effectively. Secondly, related to the commercial place issue, ‘the intentional setting’ as a counterpart of commercial places is suggested and ‘appropriating commercial places’ have been proposed to strengthen public space within and also with it.



“Recognize existing streets  
as important public spaces”

The underground street has functioned solely as a passage.  
However, more than its functional level of use, it should be  
a place for vibrant public life with an improved design for  
everyday experience.  
Thus, the following recommendations are proposed:

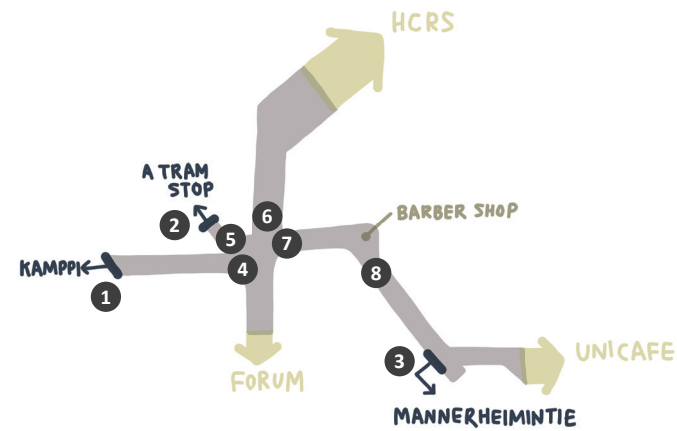
### Underground streets 1 - SITE F



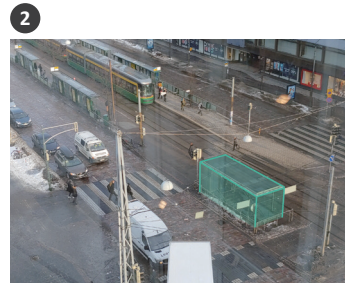
The design of the underground passage requires better  
quality materials, such as wood for the floor or furniture in  
the space. It requires consistent maintenance and oversight.



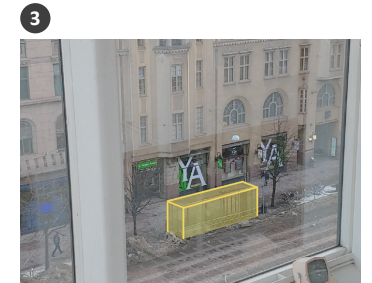
## Underground streets 2 - SITE B



Turn around a maze-like underground route to be clear and fun: Make it visible with signs and colours to be an interesting place to explore (Correct information, Good routes should be known more)



Using technology, the place could generate new experience and encourage citizens to participate to make the place.



A common design strategy for the underground street between the buildings regardless of which building is owned by whom.



Not only for passing through but also for lingering: Make one of a kind passage with proper furniture and lighting

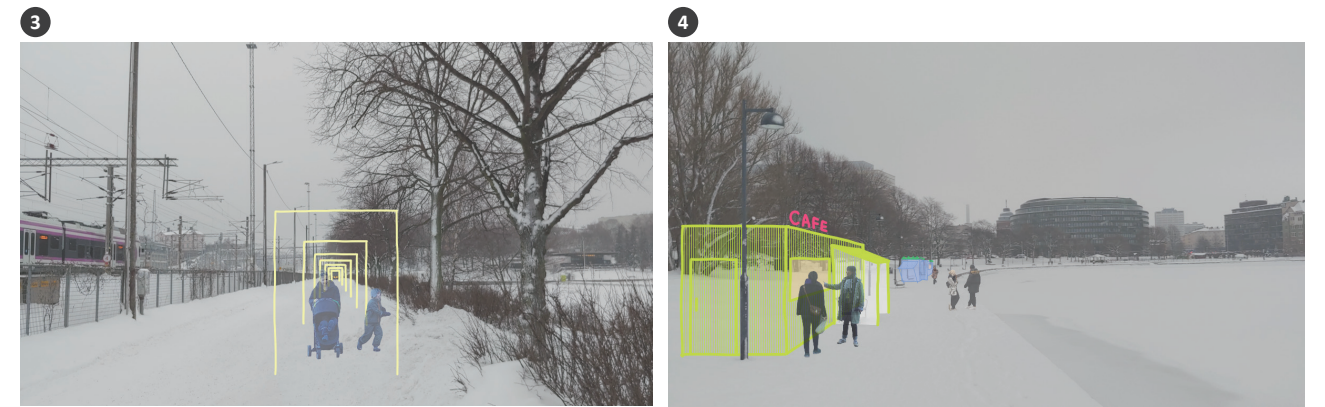




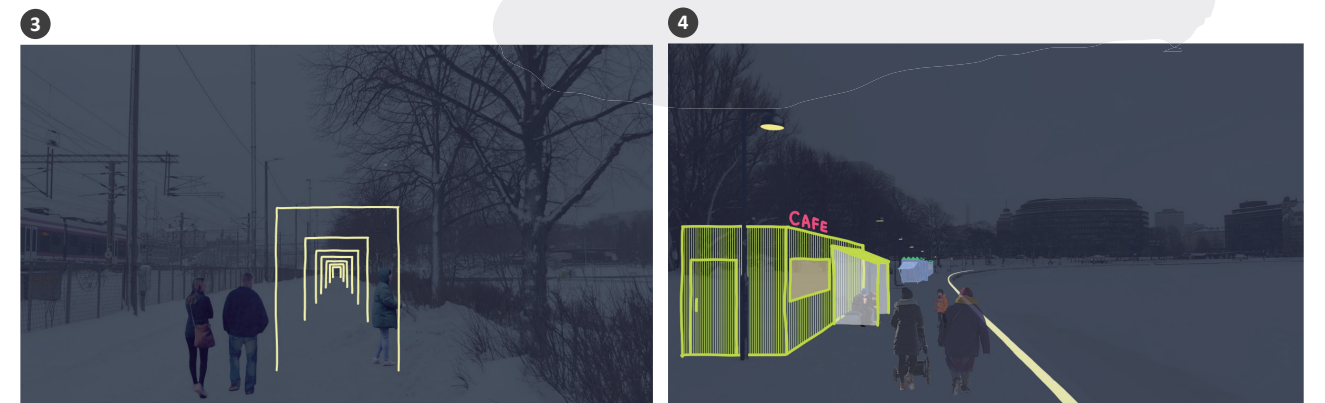
## Outside streets - SITE D and SITE E



A better walking path could be made by strengthening its aesthetic quality in winter with small destinations for winter time. A destination in a public environment could provide a motivation to go out (1). Such a destination invites more people, and it also enhances the walking experience of people who pass by. This is supported by William H. Whyte, who stated that 'the walk-through function of a space is greatly enhanced if something is going on within it. Even if one does not tarry to sit or get a snack, just seeing the activity makes a walk more interesting' (2).



Not only in daytime, but also in dark night



“Two perspectives  
on commercial places”

1) Another level of public space than commercial places

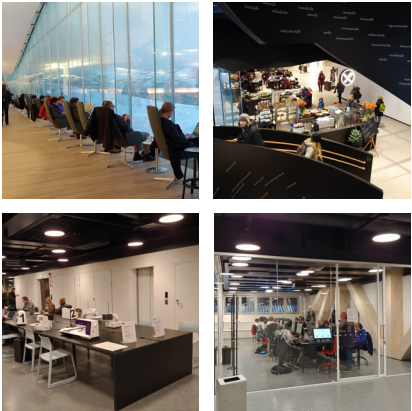
An intentional setting is necessary

There are good examples of public space in Helsinki during wintertime, such as Tiedekulma or the public library Oodi. They are open to all for free and anyone could participate with the same opportunity as others, unlike the shopping malls passively provide spaces and require people to spend money on staying in sound place, which could bring unintended discrimination.

Tiedekulma is a multi-purpose space provided by Helsinki University. It offers not only spaces for individual studying or business work, but also opportunities for interaction to see and to be seen. People can be together just by their presence in the same place and also through events such as lectures or public discussions. When they join the event, because they share their ideas freely, a deeper level of interactions between them is possible, which make people feel they are included in society.

The Oodi public library is also a setting for other various activities. In addition to the main space to read a book or study, there are several spaces for learning skills such as sewing or using 3D printing, playing a computer game which is mostly for children, watching movies, and eating food. It is a place that people could come easily not only for the specific purpose of learning but also for relaxation and for having social interactions in an undemanding way as it describes itself as ‘a living meeting place’ (3).

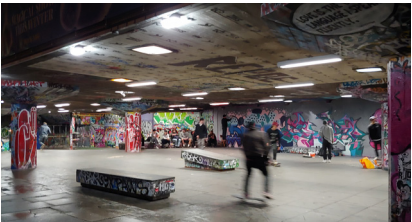
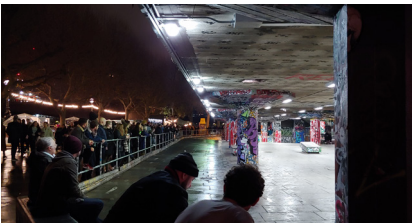
Although they are good examples of a kind of public space other than the commercial, as they are mainly for educational activities, it is necessary to consider places in terms of various other activities. For this, it should be located near the central area of Helsinki or easily accessible by public transportation that anyone could reach there easily in their daily life.



PUBLIC LIBRARY OODI



INSPIRATION FROM ESPOO  
: AFTER THE SNOW HAD MELTED AND DAY-  
LIGHT HOURS GOT LONGER, PEOPLE CAME OUT  
TO ENJOY SKATE-BOARDING, EVEN THOUGH  
THE WEATHER WAS STILL COLD.



INSPIRATION FROM LONDON  
: THERE IS A PLACE FOR SKATE-BOARDERS;  
PEOPLE WERE STANDING AROUND THIS,  
WATCHING THEM.



**The place in which urban events could happen consistently**

Like before the urban event was a key role for changing urban environment and notion, those events are crucial. In Helsinki, there is a Christmas market which opens every year in December at Senate Square and at Market Square area. Although it is not very far from the central area, people rarely visit there especially when the weather is harsh, which means that the place becomes just for tourists.

For another example of events in Winter Helsinki, there is an annual light festival called ‘Lux Helsinki’. The festival encourages people to come out from their warm house and gather in the central area to enjoy urban life and to experience winter Helsinki with a different point of view. From this a lively experience in the urban environment is created, and the city recognized as their playground just as much as it is in summer, and people feel close to their winter city and get a chance to interact with others collectively. However, this event lasts only a few days. This makes the event more special, but the problem is that it is one of the few events in winter, and the frequency of these events are too small compared to the length of winter. In the blog of PPS, it is argued that the winter events should last longer, and be combined with winter activities which present local identity (4).



LUX HELSINKI



INSPIRATION FROM HELSINKI

: A PLACE FOR VARIOUS URBAN EVENTS DURING WINTER MONTHS IS REQUIRED  
CLEANING DAY/ RESTAURANT DAY/ ARABIA FESTIVAL (FROM LEFT).

**2) Strengthen and widen public spaces throughout commercial places**

**Large shopping malls should take a role to fulfil social needs.**

As they receive a benefit from being located in the central area, malls have a responsibility to be a place for vibrant public life in winter. Providing public spaces in the shopping mall will not only provide an impression that it contributes to public welfare, but also bring profit to the shopping mall itself.

Providing public spaces does not mean solely placing benches or sofas in spare places. Such places are for the convenience of the shopper, not for the general public or even to generate public life there. They do not give people a hint of what to do there. It will probably be just too hard task for a shopping mall to be a charming public space. As explained previously, it is difficult to expect a rich public life on the street of a shopping mall as it could not have soft edges effect and it is not for a community-based place. Thus, if there is no concrete aim to provide spaces for improving public life in winter, the place will be hardly made. When the shopping mall is newly built, for example of SOKOS expanding, it should allocate some places for public use from the beginning phase of planning. Because it is connected to the metro station and central railway station, the connection area should be in thoughtful consideration.

Nevertheless, for the large shopping malls already built in the central area of Helsinki, the availability of existing sitting places should be improved. Since there are few places to publicly gather in winter and shopping malls are a crucial location, sitting places should be supplied in them. When allocating benches and sofas appear to be creating issues, there should be further examination into these issues before determining with other ways to create public space.

To implement these ideas, regulation and research are required. If the public does not have a say in the public space, it might bring no result. And there might be a no different outcome than just putting some benches or chairs. When it is agreed that a shopping mall is an important place for gathering in winter, an institutional level strategy. A strategic plan would include, firstly, a regulation that engages



SHOPPING MALL IN ESPOO WITH A PUBLIC SPACE IN THE CENTRE.



ANOTHER SHOPPING MALL IN ESPOO WITH A PUBLIC SPACE. ALTHOUGH CHILDREN WERE USING THE SPACE, THEY WERE LOOKING AT THEIR PHONES AND SEEMED BORED.



the planning of shopping malls, which does not entail regulating with specific design elements, for example, a number of benches, but rather monitoring whether the planning process includes the discussion of public spaces for winter or not. Secondly, the research of public spaces in shopping malls should be conducted by urban professionals, including discussions with demographics of varying age groups. Unlike the business-oriented process of designing shopping malls, everyday citizens should be engaged in the process of developing public space in a mall because they are more than a commercial place in winter Helsinki.

**Establish conditions for small markets or vendors to thrive in winter**

Small markets or vendors significantly support the public life of the city. While it has been undermined to have them near the street in winter because of the weather, if it is on the underground street or in the intentional settings, as mentioned in the previous design idea section, small markets or vendors could be placed there and enhance the vibrancy of public life. This small market idea is not to be only limited for selling products, but is also means to provide a chance for different people to engage in society. For example, when there are shops for second-hand stuff and handcraft works, it will be a place that people could gather and share their story naturally.



INSPIRATION FROM KOREA  
: A SMALL LIBRARY IN THE SHOPPING MALL,  
WHICH PROVIDES SUGGESTIONS FOR THINGS  
TO DO.



INSPIRATION FROM LONDON  
: EVEN THOUGH IT IS WINTER, THE STREETS  
ARE FULL OF PEOPLE BECAUSE OF THE STREET  
FOOD.

*“Until now such fantasy and experiment have been attempted mostly by commercial facilities, at rather low levels of quality and aspiration, seldom deeply experimental. One should not have to travel as far as the Himalayas or the South Sea Islands to stretch one’s experience. Such challenges could be nearer home. There should be a place for community utopias; for historic, natural, and anthropological evocations of the modern city, for encounters with the truly exotic.”*

-Michael Larice; Elizabeth Macdonald. (5)

# 6 Conclusion

To research the targeted area which is the streets near Helsinki Central Railway Station, an observation method was used because it is a standard method for public life studies. During the process, it became clear that the observation method is crucial for this sort of study. By analyzing data from systematic observation and findings from general observations, it was deduced that the street and large shopping malls are the most important public places in winter as other public spaces are not available.

The streets in winter are regarded as a walking passage and have not been seriously considered as a place for public life. However, the underground streets and outside of the street around Helsinki Central Railway Station have advantages to be a sound public space in winter because the former is a protected inside space from harsh weather, which is preferred to be used in winter, and the latter has beautiful natural scenery, which is hard to find in a regular city center. Nevertheless, these possibilities were hidden from the eyes of people. These streets were used only as passages so that maintenance for some streets was done at a practical level, and other streets were even neglected. It was argued that as the daily experience of these places forms personal and collective memories, redesigning these places to activate them for the wintertime should be examined regardless of whether they are underground streets or outside streets.

While observation of the street is the focused place for this thesis from observation process, the discourse on commercial places in terms of its relationship with public spaces begun in the discussion section, as large shopping malls are one of the few available public spaces in winter. The quality of a large shopping mall was low to generate a rich public life, but it was claimed that they should take a role to provide decent public spaces because it receives many benefits from its location and function. Other commercial places such as a small market or a vendor were also mentioned for their positive role to enhance public life to the public space which is near them or surrounding them.

The design ideas comprise many streets and commercial places in terms of how it can be improved, which was supported by reference pictures and simple drawings. These diagrams were not highly detailed, and while they cover many areas the author maintains that the process to achieve specific outcomes should include the participation of citizens.

The limitation of this research comes from the lack of systematic observations and interviews. Although personal experiences were used as an alternative, it was not sufficient to cover various opinions. However, this research is meaningful as it tackles the issue and stresses the importance of observational methods in a public life study. Further research is required to analyze public life of Helsinki citizens in more depth to draw concrete solutions.

Notes

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(13) Ibid: p.58

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(24) Gehl, Jan. Cities for People . Washington: Island Press, 2010: p.119

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4. Findings and analysis

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(3) <https://www.oodihelsinki.fi/en/what-is-oodi/>

(4) <https://www.pps.org/article/winter-cities>

(5) Larice, Michael, and Elizabeth Macdonald. The Urban Design Reader. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2013: p.223

6. Conclusion

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Photos

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